

THE RHODESIAN CRISIS IN BRITISH AND
INTERNATIONAL POLITICS, 1964-1965

by

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A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham

For the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Historical Studies
The University of Birmingham
April 2006

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Abstract

This thesis uses evidence from British and international archives to examine the events leading up to Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) on 11 November 1965 from the perspectives of Britain, the Old Commonwealth (Canada, Australia, and New Zealand), and the United States. Two underlying themes run throughout the thesis. First, it argues that although the problem of Rhodesian independence was highly complex, a UDI was by no means inevitable. There were courses of action that were dismissed or remained under explored (especially in Britain, but also in the Old Commonwealth, and the United States), which could have been pursued further and may have prevented a UDI. Second, the thesis argues there were structural weaknesses in the machinery of government of each of the major actors, but particularly in Britain. This made the management of the Rhodesian Crisis more difficult, contributed to the likelihood of a UDI, and exacerbated tension in relations between Britain and its international partners. In stressing these themes the thesis builds upon some of the earlier literature that was critical of the Labour Government's foreign and Commonwealth policies. Although this thesis is primarily an international history, it also makes use of theories from political science and international relations to frame certain aspects of the empirical research.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Patricia, and my father, Peter.

They always encouraged me to walk this path.

Acknowledgements

This thesis was completed without any assistance from the Arts and Humanities Research Board, but fortunately there are several institutions that did consider my scholarship to be worthy of funding and I am pleased to acknowledge them here. I am grateful to the School of Historical Studies at the University of Birmingham for providing me with fees bursaries in the academic years 1998-1999 and 1999-2000, without which I would never have begun my research. The University of Birmingham also kindly awarded me a George Henry Marshall Scholarship in 1999-2000, which was the only year in which my research was properly funded. I am obliged to the Royal Historical Society, which provided me with some travel funds to undertake a great deal of archival research in the UK during 1999, and in the USA during 2003. My trips to the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Texas, and the Bentley Historical Library, Michigan, revived my enthusiasm for the PhD and gave me the necessary material for articles that were subsequently published in the *Michigan Academician* and *Diplomatic History*. I would also like to thank the Department of History, and the Research and Development Office at Grand Valley State University, where I was employed as a Visiting Assistant Professor, 2003-2006. During that period, GVSU very generously provided full funding for me to present my research at the 30th Annual Meeting of the Western Conference on British Studies in Tucson, Arizona (October 2003); the Annual Conference of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations in Austin, Texas (June 2004); the Transatlantic Studies Association Conference in Nottingham (July 2005); and the 'Rhodesian UDI: 40 Years On' Conference in the Cold War Studies Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science (January 2006).

I must also thank a number of individuals who have at various times provided me with advice and encouragement. Not least among this number is my research supervisor, Dr Nicholas Crowson, for his helpful input over a far longer period than either he or I had ever anticipated. Dr Larry Butler (Department of History, University of East Anglia), advised me on sources during the early stages of my research and later had many kind words to say about my published work. I am very grateful to Professor Andrew DeRoche (Chair, Department of History, Front Range Community College), and Professor Thomas J. Noer, (Valor Distinguished Professor, Carthage College), for their constructive comments on my research on the Anglo-American aspects of the Rhodesian Crisis. My work on the viability of British military intervention in Rhodesia has been greatly strengthened by the contributions of Rhodesian ex-servicemen, and I am much obliged to them for taking the time to respond to my questions on a subject that remains sensitive some four decades after Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence.

Finally, I wish to thank my family and friends for their love and support. During the early years of my research I had several personal and financial difficulties that almost derailed the project altogether, but my mother, father, sister, and many friends, always encouraged me to keep moving forward. I was deeply saddened by the death of my mother in September 2003, and I much regret that she did not see the completion of the thesis, which I know would have made her proud. The last word of thanks goes to my wife, Shannon, for her love, patience, and understanding during the last three years.

Carl P. Watts

Grand Rapids, Michigan

April 2006

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Introduction

Past and Present Scholarship on the Rhodesian Crisis

The Rhodesian Crisis: recent interest and scholarship

During the 1960s the disintegration of the Central African Federation and the concomitant problems of granting independence to Southern Rhodesia attracted a significant amount of coverage in the British media and a high degree of interest among academics.¹ The level of scrutiny intensified in the wake of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) on 11 November 1965. Many books were published that examined the events leading up to UDI and subsequent efforts to bring Rhodesia back to legality through diplomatic negotiations and economic sanctions. As the armed confrontation between African nationalists and the UDI regime escalated, a number of books also appeared about the bush war. After Rhodesia eventually became legally independent as Zimbabwe in 1980 a couple of studies of the Lancaster House negotiations emerged, and a few other books on Rhodesia's independence were published, then interest generally subsided.² In the last few years, however, a combination of media attention, academic research, publications, oral history projects, and conferences has revealed a renewed interest in the Rhodesian Crisis and the recent history of southern Africa.

¹ After Northern Rhodesia became independent as the state of Zambia in October 1964, Southern Rhodesia was usually referred to simply as Rhodesia. That pattern of nomenclature is used in this thesis.

² For a guide to the older literature see M. E. Doro, *Rhodesia/Zimbabwe: A Bibliographic Guide to the Nationalist Period* (Boston, MA: G. K. Hall, 1984); O. Pollack and K. Pollack, *Rhodesia/Zimbabwe: An International Bibliography* (Oxford: Clio Press, 1979); D. Potts, *World Bibliographical Series, Volume 4: Zimbabwe* (Oxford: Clio Press, rev. edn., 1993); and the online bibliography maintained by Richard Wood, available at http://www.jrtwood.com/rhodesia_zimbabwe_political.asp

First, the British media has reported the troubles in Zimbabwe, which has prompted a renewed interest in Rhodesia's history. In a debate at the Oxford Union in October 2000, Ian Smith refused to apologise for atrocities committed while he held office. He said he had no regrets about the estimated 30,000 Zimbabweans killed during the period of Rhodesian Front rule.³ Second, younger historians – searching for suitable topics on which to base their research – have taken advantage of the vast number of records released into the public domain in accordance with the Thirty Year Rule.⁴ Third, a number of notable books have emerged recently. In terms of primary sources, historians have been well served by the *British Documents on the End of Empire Project*, which has made a good selection of documents on the Rhodesian Crisis available to scholars.⁵ In terms of autobiography and biography, historians have had the benefit of Ian Smith's

³ *The Observer*, 29 October 2000.

⁴ For example: Evan D. Fountain, 'Purposes of economic sanctions: British objectives in the Rhodesian crisis, 1964-79', Oxford D.Phil (2000); Richard Coggins, 'Rhodesian UDI and the search for a settlement, 1964-8: failure of decolonization', Oxford D.Phil (2002); Alice Robinson, 'Britain and the Rhodesian crisis, 1964-5, with special reference to South Africa and the United States', Ulster M.Phil (2003); Claire Waddingham, 'Colonial misjudgement: a comparative study of British policy towards the Mau Mau emergency in Kenya, 1952-6, and the unilateral declaration of independence in Rhodesia, 1964-8', Exeter M.Phil (in progress, 2005); Julian Francis, 'The Seeds of UDI: an argument for and an examination of internal and external factors that shaped a Rhodesian national identity', Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, Ph.D (in progress, 2006); Andrew Cohen, 'Settler Power, African Nationalism and British Interests in the Central African Federation, 1957-63', Sheffield Ph.D (in progress, 2006).

⁵ S. R. Ashton and Wm. Roger Louis (eds.), *British Documents on the End of Empire, Series A, Volume 5, Part II: Europe, Rhodesia, Commonwealth* (London: The Stationery Office, 2004); and Philip Murphy (ed.), *British Documents on the End of Empire, Series B, Volume 9, Part II: Crisis and Dissolution, 1959-1965* (London: The Stationery Office, 2005). These volumes referred to hereafter as BDEEP.

vituperative memoirs, published in 1997,⁶ and Alan Megahey's study of the 'beleaguered' Governor of Southern Rhodesia, Sir Humphrey Gibbs, published in 1998.⁷ Richard Wood's lengthy account of Rhodesia's attempts to obtain independence, which is based on sole access to the hitherto closed papers of Ian Smith as well as British Government papers, was published only very recently.⁸ From the British perspective, John Young's study of the Labour Government's international policy, which also benefits from the use of recently released British Government files, has made an important contribution to the debate on Labour's performance in office during the period 1964-70.⁹

A fourth factor that has both reflected and stimulated interest in the Rhodesian Crisis is the number of projects that have captured the story of Rhodesia's painful journey towards independence in the words of the people who lived it. In 1999, David Dimbleby presented a three-part BBC documentary series entitled *Rebellion*, which featured interviews with many of the surviving protagonists including former British Labour Ministers Barbara Castle, Denis Healey, and George Thomson; Sir Oliver Wright, Private Secretary to Harold Wilson, 1964-66; Rhodesian Ministers Ian Smith, Jack Mussett, and P. K. Van Der Byl; and African nationalist leaders, including Robert Mugabe and Bishop Abel Muzorewa. In September 2000, the Institute of Contemporary British History

⁶ Ian Douglas Smith, *The Great Betrayal: The Memoirs of Ian Douglas Smith* (London: Blake, 1997); and *Bitter Harvest: The Great Betrayal and the Dreadful Aftermath* (London: Blake, 2001).

⁷ Alan Megahey, *Humphrey Gibbs: Beleaguered Governor. Southern Rhodesia, 1929-1969* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998).

⁸ J. R. T. Wood, *'So Far and No Further!' Rhodesia's Bid for Independence during the Retreat from Empire 1959-1965* (Victoria, B.C.: Trafford Publishing, 2005).

⁹ John W. Young, *The Labour Governments 1964-70, Volume 2: International Policy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

organised a Witness Seminar on ‘Rhodesian UDI’, held at the National Archives, Kew. Participants included: Sir Oliver Wright; George Cunningham, who served as an adviser in the Labour Party Overseas Department; Sir John Pestell, Comptroller to Humphrey Gibbs; and several Conservative and Labour Members of Parliament.¹⁰ Similarly, as part of its Southern Africa Initiative, the Cold War Studies Centre at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) organised a further Witness Seminar on ‘Britain and Rhodesia: Road to Settlement’, again held at the National Archives, in July 2005. Participants included: Lord Carrington, Foreign Secretary, 1979-1982; Lord Steel, leader of the Liberal Party, 1976-88; and Peter Jay, British Ambassador to Washington, 1977-79.¹¹

Finally, 11 November 2005 marked the fortieth anniversary of UDI, which occasioned two academic conferences. In September 2005, the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, Cambridge, organised a conference entitled ‘UDI Forty Years On: Liberation, Confrontation and Co-operation’, opened by Kenneth Kaunda, President of Zambia at the time of UDI.¹² In January 2006, a similar conference was held as part of the Southern Africa Initiative in the Cold War Studies Centre at the LSE, opened by Lord Owen, who was involved in the Rhodesian Crisis as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Navy, 1968-70, and as Foreign Secretary, 1977-79.¹³

¹⁰ See <http://www.icbh.ac.uk/icbh/witness/rhodesia/>

¹¹ See <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CWSC/events/pastEvents2005.htm#CWSCNationalArchiveWitnessSeminar>

¹² See <http://www.udi40.org>

¹³ See http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CWSC/events/rhodesia_jan_06.htm

This level of academic interest looks set to continue, especially under the auspices of the Southern Africa Initiative and the Struggles for Freedom in Southern Africa Collection (Aluka Project). The Southern Africa Initiative has three major goals: first, to foster collaboration and coordination among established and emerging scholars, mainly through symposia and conferences (some of which are mentioned above); second, to bridge the gap between historians, archives and archivists, so that the full range of archival material available in the southern African region and internationally can be fully integrated into current research and scholarship; and third, to support and encourage research and scholarship by southern African graduates, as well as foreign researchers who wish to further their studies in Cold War issues in the southern African region.¹⁴ This promises some great practical benefits. For example, among the projects currently under consideration is a new bibliography on the Rhodesian Crisis, and a register of current research on southern Africa in the Cold War. In terms of the identification and collation of important archival sources, the Aluka Project (part of the wider Ithaka Project) is highly significant. It aims to: ‘document the liberation struggles in southern Africa since the end of World War II through a carefully selected set of historical documents, periodicals, newspaper clippings, organizational records, personal papers of historical figures, oral histories, photographs, and other visual materials.’¹⁵ The first phase of the project covers five countries – Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe – and at the time of writing the Zimbabwe Aluka Committee had recently produced its draft, ‘Report on the Architecture of the Zimbabwe Aluka Project’.¹⁶ This

¹⁴ See http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CWSC/SouthernAfricaInitiative/About_the_Southern_Africa_Initiative.htm

¹⁵ See <http://www.ithaka.org/aluka/content.htm>

¹⁶ Professor Terence Ranger distributed copies of this report to the delegates at the LSE Conference in January 2006.

project, once completed, will be extremely valuable for future scholars, particularly those interested in the Rhodesian Crisis from the perspective of the Liberation Movements.

The thesis: scope, historiography, and arguments

These multiple signs of proliferating interest in southern African studies are encouraging, but the history of Rhodesia's UDI – especially the period leading up to UDI – remains relatively under researched, particularly the international context.¹⁷ This thesis is therefore intended partly to fill some of the gaps in existing knowledge, and in other respects to revise the contemporary interpretations of events (both of which are well-established rationales for many doctoral theses). Part One investigates the Rhodesian Crisis from a British perspective, challenging some of the extant academic studies and autobiographical accounts of the Wilson Government's handling of the issue. Part Two examines the Commonwealth dimension, especially the involvement of the Old Commonwealth, which has been a sorely neglected topic in studies of UDI. Part Three documents the impact of the Rhodesian Crisis on the Anglo-American special relationship, and analyses the nature of policy formulation in the Lyndon B. Johnson administration, adding to the existing literature in those academic fields of enquiry. It should be appreciated that due to the limitations of length imposed on this thesis, it is necessarily selective and limited to discussion of the British, Commonwealth, and United States dimensions of the Rhodesian Crisis. This thesis is not intended to be a comprehensive international history: such a study would obviously have to take into account the involvement of the United Nations, and the Organisation of African Unity;

¹⁷ This is acknowledged, for example, in Coggins, 'Rhodesian UDI and the search for a settlement', p. 30.

and the role of regional actors, including South Africa and Portugal.¹⁸ This is first and foremost an empirical study, but it does make some limited use of international relations and political science theories where this helps to frame the research (especially in the third section of the thesis). The remainder of this Introduction provides further details of the historiography that is relevant to the three parts of the thesis, the arguments advanced, the sources used, and a brief indication of the major conclusions reached.

Part One: Britain and the Rhodesian Crisis

Robert Good, the U.S. ambassador to Zambia at the time of UDI, suggested a few years later that the British Government's Rhodesia policy had suffered from multiple weaknesses: poor political judgment (especially the mistake of ruling out the use of force publicly); unrealistic aims (attempting to produce a 'change of heart' among white Rhodesians); and insufficient means (economic sanctions).¹⁹ Some early British accounts were also highly critical of the Wilson Government's handling of the Rhodesian Crisis. Kenneth Young, the political adviser to Beaverbrook Newspapers, wrote an account that was highly sympathetic to the Rhodesian Front. Whilst this thesis is certainly not written from a perspective that shares Young's political sympathies, it does agree with his conclusion that the Rhodesian Crisis 'disclosed all too clearly the erratic nature of [the British] Government's policy-making, before and more particularly after UDI ... It certainly had a desperately *ad hoc* quality, never seeming on Monday to look further than

¹⁸ See Carl P. Watts, *Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence: A Study in International Crisis* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming, 2008).

¹⁹ Robert C. Good, *UDI: The International Politics of the Rhodesian Rebellion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 293.

the following Friday.’²⁰ In other cases, criticism of British policy was informed by a belief that both main political parties had demonstrated an inexcusable weakness in their dealings with the Rhodesian Government. Elaine Windrich, a research assistant to the Parliamentary Labour Party during the 1960s, initially began writing her book as ‘a critique of the Labour party’s failure to implement its policy commitments on Rhodesia.’ However, she recognised that the Conservatives had a comparable record and therefore extended her discussion of British policy up to the date of publication (1978). Windrich observed that both parties ruled out the only effective means of resolving the Rhodesian Crisis (use of force) and became trapped in a fruitless search for an agreement between the Rhodesian Front and the African nationalists, neither of whom were prepared to compromise.²¹ There is much to be said in favour of Windrich’s argument, and in this thesis it is argued that the use of force was indeed the most efficacious means of producing a solution in Rhodesia. Another participatory account came from Miles Hudson, who was head of Rhodesian affairs in the Conservative Research Department from 1965, Political Secretary to Alec Douglas-Home 1971-74, and closely involved with the settlement of the Rhodesian problem 1979-80. Hudson recognised that ‘political leaders are constrained by circumstances in the decisions they come to’, but suggested that the response of politicians to the Rhodesian problem was ‘muddled and inconsistent’, and characterised by a ‘constant series of miscalculations ... often palpable and gross ...

²⁰ Kenneth Young, *Rhodesia and Independence* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1967), p. 504.

²¹ Elaine Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), p. 7. Windrich also edited a collection of ‘documents’ on the Rhodesian problem. These are mainly partial extracts from command papers and memoirs, and journal articles written in the 1960s. Windrich (ed.), *The Rhodesian Problem: A Documentary Record, 1923-1973* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975).

nearly all the result of wishful thinking.’²² This thesis puts forward a substantial body of documentary evidence that substantiates the view that there was considerable muddle and wishful thinking in the Labour Government’s handling of the Rhodesian Crisis.

These examples of the critical literature on Labour’s Rhodesia policy fit into a broader historiographical orthodoxy in which politicians, journalists, and academics have lambasted the Labour Government, and Harold Wilson in particular, for its failures. Clive Ponting equated the poor record of the Labour Government with Wilson’s leadership and suggested that ‘the blame for the government’s overall failure has to rest largely with him.’²³ A number of Wilson’s colleagues drew attention to his faults, including his scheming, indecision, excessive concern with detail, and absurd optimism.²⁴ Denis Healey commented that ‘His short-term opportunism, allied with a capacity for self-delusion which made Walter Mitty appear unimaginative, often plunged the government into chaos.’²⁵ One early biographer argued that this ‘Walter Mitty’ side of Wilson’s character affected his foreign policy, because he deluded himself that he could end the Vietnam War and bring down the illegal Rhodesian regime.²⁶ Writing in the late 1980s, Kenneth Morgan observed that Wilson seemed ‘in acute danger of becoming a universal scapegoat ... for all the misfortunes of British life between 1964 and 1976’, but

²² Miles Hudson, *Triumph or Tragedy? Rhodesia to Zimbabwe* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1982), ‘Introduction’.

²³ Clive Ponting, *Breach of Promise: Labour in Power, 1964-70* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989), p. 405. In Ch. 8, ‘The Shadow of the Past: Rhodesia’, Ponting is less critical of Wilson.

²⁴ Young, *The Labour Governments 1964-70*, Vol. 2, pp. 3-4.

²⁵ Denis Healey, *The Time of My Life* (London: Michael Joseph, 1989), p. 331.

²⁶ Andrew Roth, *Harold Wilson: Yorkshire Walter Mitty* (London: Macdonald, 1977), pp. 6 and 53. Cited in Young, *The Labour Governments 1964-70*, Vol. 2, p. 4.

thought it probable that ‘historians will take a more charitable and compassionate view of his career and achievements’.²⁷ This was a prescient comment, as subsequent biographies of Wilson portrayed him in a much more sympathetic light, observing the serious political and economic constraints under which he had to operate and acknowledging his success in maintaining party unity and winning elections.²⁸ Revisionist historians have also challenged the disastrous reputation of the Labour Governments of the 1960s, both in domestic and foreign policy.²⁹ Chris Wrigley has emphasised the essential continuity in foreign policy between the Conservatives and Labour, which is masked by the fact that ‘Wilson’s actions were often remarkably volatile in the short term.’³⁰ Certainly it can be argued that there was considerable continuity between the Conservatives and Labour in terms of their foreign policies. This is evident for, example, in the fact that Wilson continued the special relationship with the United States and submitted an application for EEC membership, and such policies tended to produce dissent on the Labour backbenches.³¹ Continuity was also clear in their Rhodesia policy, which Wilson himself

²⁷ Kenneth O. Morgan, *Labour People. Leaders and Lieutenants, Hardie to Kinnock* (First published 1987; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 246 and 247.

²⁸ Ben Pimlott, *Harold Wilson* (London: HarperCollins, 1992); and Philip Ziegler, *Wilson: The Authorised Life of Lord Wilson of Rievaulx* (London: HarperCollins, 1993).

²⁹ Richard Coopey, Stephen Fielding and Nick Tiratsoo (eds.), *The Wilson Governments 1964-1970* (London: Pinter, 1993); and Young, *The Labour Governments 1964-70*, Vol. 2. A forthcoming study, which also contributes to the revisionist literature on the domestic and foreign policy of the Labour Government, is Glen O’Hara and Helen Parr (eds.), *The Wilson Governments 1964-70 Reconsidered* (London: Routledge, 2006).

³⁰ Chris Wrigley, ‘Now you see it, now you don’t: Harold Wilson and Labour’s foreign policy 1964-70’, in Coopey, Fielding, and Tiratsoo (eds.), *The Wilson Governments 1964-1970*, p. 124.

³¹ J. Richard Piper, ‘Backbench Rebellion, Party Government and Consensus Politics: the Case of the Parliamentary Labour Party, 1966-1970’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (1974), pp. 384-96.

was keen to emphasise in order to prevent the Conservatives from scoring any political points at Labour's expense.³² Yet this hardly constitutes a revisionist assessment because it was acknowledged – indeed it was criticised – in the orthodox literature.

As indicated above, this thesis lends additional weight to the orthodox view of the Labour Government's Rhodesia policy. Chapter One begins with a brief look at the policy of the Labour Party in Opposition. It notes that during the 1950s Wilson demonstrated little interest in the Central African Federation, but when he became Party leader he expressed strong views publicly and privately that Southern Rhodesia should not be granted independence before African majority rule, which was increasingly at variance with the more cautious approach of some of his colleagues. In office, however, Wilson immediately recognised that his previous views left little room for manoeuvre in negotiations with the Rhodesian Government, and he was prepared to compromise the principle of African majority rule in order to obtain a settlement. The chapter observes the dominant role that Wilson played in the shaping of British policy and the conduct of negotiations with the Rhodesian Government, but suggests that the focus of the negotiations was misplaced. They were therefore unlikely to produce an outcome satisfactory to the British Government, the Rhodesian Government, or the African nationalists in Rhodesia. The chapter then uses a variety of public records to examine the contingency plans that the British Government formulated to deal with a UDI, and argues

³² Hence Barbara Castle's comment that: 'Harold Wilson was obsessed with the need to get a consensus with the Conservatives on Rhodesia if at all possible.' *The Castle Diaries, 1964-1970* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984), p. xv.

that the planning process was compromised as a result of procrastination, bureaucratic conflict, and wishful thinking.³³

Chapter Two examines two alternative policies that the Labour Government could have pursued either to rid itself of the Rhodesian problem or to impose a settlement. The chapter first considers the advantages and disadvantages of handing responsibility for Rhodesia to the United Nations. The chapter argues that the British Government was afraid to do so because of the likelihood that it would have led to the application of sanctions against South Africa, which would have further undermined Britain's already precarious economic position. Second, the chapter uses correspondence from former members of the Rhodesian security services, recent oral testimony from British politicians and civil servants, and newly available documentary evidence from archives around the world, to re-examine the viability of British military intervention in Rhodesia during 1964 and 1965.³⁴ The chapter argues that the military and political obstacles to the use of force cited at the time and since have been grossly exaggerated. These competing claims have never been properly assessed on the basis of the considerable documentary evidence

³³ The chapter is based on a large number of public and private archives, but the main British Government records series used are: The National Archives [hereafter TNA]: Public Records Office, Kew [hereafter PRO], CAB 130, Cabinet: Miscellaneous Committees: Minutes and Papers (GEN, MISC and REF Series), 1945-1976; CAB 148, Cabinet Office: Defence and Oversea Policy Committee and Sub-committees: Minutes and Papers (DO, DOP, and OPD Series), 1964-1970; DO 183, Central African Office and Commonwealth Relations Office [hereafter CRO]: Central Africa: Registered Files (CAO Series), 1962-1966; and FO 371, Foreign Office: Political Departments: General Correspondence, 1906-1966.

³⁴ The British Government records dealing with military contingency planning are in: TNA: PRO, DEFE 25, Ministry of Defence: Chief of Defence Staff: Registered Files (CDS, SCDS and ACDS (OPS) Series), 1957-1980; and DEFE 32, Ministry of Defence: Chiefs of Staff Committee: Secretary's Standard Files, 1946-1983.

available in international archives and the one study of any consequence is now thirty years old.³⁵ The chapter argues that with sufficient resolve, the Labour Government could have used force in an attempt to prevent or end UDI. This might have offered a forthright solution to one of the most protracted and embarrassing international problems that confronted successive British governments during disengagement from Empire. The discussion of military intervention is one of the most distinctive parts of the thesis and it has already been published.³⁶

Part Two: The Commonwealth and the Rhodesian Crisis

Within a few years of the end of the Second World War the Commonwealth began to change. With the admission of India, Pakistan, and Ceylon it was no longer the British Commonwealth of Nations, bound by blood ties, but a multiracial Commonwealth, based on the principle of racial equality.³⁷ The British Government presented this process as the

³⁵ Douglas G. Anglin, 'Britain and the Use of Force in Rhodesia', in Michael G. Fry (ed.), *Freedom and Change: essays in honour of Lester B. Pearson* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), pp. 43-75. For a short analysis that does refer to British documentary sources concerning the use of force see Young, *The Labour Governments 1964-70*, Vol. 2, pp. 177-79. See also Philip Murphy, "'An intricate and distasteful subject": British planning for the use of force against European settlers of Central Africa, 1952-65', *English Historical Review* (forthcoming, 2006).

³⁶ See Carl P. Watts, 'Killing Kith and Kin: The Viability of British Military Intervention in Rhodesia, 1964-5', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (December 2005), pp. 382-415.

³⁷ In 1948 Whitehall mandarins advised that 'British' should be omitted in front of 'Commonwealth of Nations'. William David McIntyre, 'The Commonwealth', in Robin W. Winks (ed.), *Oxford History of the British Empire Volume V: Historiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 558; and idem, 'Commonwealth Legacy', in Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (eds.), *Oxford History of the British Empire Volume IV: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 696.

culmination of an imperial mission to prepare colonial peoples for self-government.³⁸ Some historians perpetuated this Whiggish interpretation. Nicholas Mansergh, for example, suggested that when the Asian Dominions became part of the Commonwealth: ‘The image of [the] Commonwealth was thereby embellished in the eyes both of Asian, African and other colonial nationalist leaders and also in those hitherto unenthusiastic or, more usually, sceptical left-wing progressives in Britain and the old dominions.’³⁹ Britain’s image within the Commonwealth was of course subsequently tarnished by the Suez debacle,⁴⁰ but by 1961 the British Government had managed to restore some of its moral credibility with Commonwealth members through its espousal of the ‘wind of change’ in Africa. This apparent moral and political unity resulted in South Africa’s departure from the Commonwealth in May 1961, and some commentators heralded a new era in which the Commonwealth would become a prominent international actor.⁴¹ Yet as Stephen Chan has acknowledged, at this time ‘the Commonwealth was far from an institution of triumphant virtue.’⁴² Difficult issues still remained unresolved, including relations with the apartheid regime in South Africa and the question of Rhodesian independence. Harold Wilson was of course acutely conscious of the strength of Commonwealth feeling on the Rhodesian issue, later writing in his memoirs that the

³⁸ Wm. Roger Louis, ‘The Dissolution of the British Empire’, in Brown and Louis (eds.), *Oxford History of the British Empire Vol. IV*, p. 329.

³⁹ Nicholas Mansergh, *The Commonwealth Experience* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), p. 341.

⁴⁰ See Michael G. Fry, ‘Canada, the North Atlantic Triangle, and the United Nations’; Peter Lyon, ‘The Commonwealth and the Suez Crisis’, and Bruce Miller, ‘Australia and the Crisis’; in Wm. Roger Louis and Roger Owen (eds.), *Suez 1956: The Crisis and its Consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

⁴¹ Stephen Chan, *The Commonwealth in World Politics. A Study of International Action 1965 to 1985* (London: Lester Crook Academic Publishing, 1988), p. 4.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Commonwealth was one of four ‘constituencies’ whose opinion he had to consider in attempting a settlement.⁴³

Yet despite the importance of the Commonwealth as a conditioning factor in British policy, the Commonwealth aspects of the Rhodesian Crisis have not attracted much scholarly attention and there has certainly been nothing published on this recently.⁴⁴ This thesis therefore places a heavy emphasis on the Commonwealth dimension in order to

⁴³ Harold Wilson, *The Labour Government 1964-1970: A Personal Record* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, and Michael Joseph, 1971), pp. 180-81. The other three ‘constituencies’ were Rhodesian opinion, British opinion, and international opinion at the United Nations.

⁴⁴ Studies of domestic opinion and bilateral relations include: Robert Matthews and Cranford Pratt, ‘Canadian Policy Towards Southern Africa’, in D. G. Anglin, T. Shaw, and C. Widstrand (eds.), *Canada, Scandinavia and Southern Africa* (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1978), pp. 164-178; Richard V. Hall, ‘Australia and Rhodesia: Black Interests and White Lies’, in Frank S. Stevens (ed.), *Racism: The Australian Experience, Volume 3: Colonialism* (New York: Taplinger, 1972), pp. 175-86; Glen St. J. Barclay, ‘Friends in Salisbury: Australia and the Rhodesian Unilateral Declaration of Independence, 1965-72’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1983), pp. 38-49; Malcolm McKinnon, *Independence and Foreign Policy: New Zealand in the World Since 1935* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1993), pp. 235-38; M. P. K. Sorrenson, *New Zealand and the Rhodesia Crisis: The Lessons of History* (Auckland: Citizens Association for Racial Equality, 1968). Two studies that discuss the Rhodesian problem in the context of the Commonwealth as a whole are: James Barber, ‘The Impact of the Rhodesian Crisis on the Commonwealth’, *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (July 1969), pp. 83-95; and J. D. B. Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of Expansion and Attrition 1953-1969* (London: Oxford University Press for The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1974), Ch. 9 ‘Rhodesia (i): The Lost Dominion’, pp. 167-203; and Ch. 10 ‘Rhodesia (ii): The Commonwealth After UDI’, pp. 204-46.

correct the deficiencies in existing scholarship.⁴⁵ Chapter Three discusses the attitudes of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand towards the new, multiracial Commonwealth, and investigates their attitudes towards the problem of Rhodesia independence. The chapter examines the strong undercurrent of racialism in Australia and New Zealand, and uses many new archival sources to demonstrate that there was significant sympathy for the European settlers in Rhodesia and an aversion to African nationalist demands for majority rule. The chapter shows that Canada, on the other hand, adopted a much more positive attitude towards the multiracial Commonwealth and was sympathetic towards African aspirations in Rhodesia. This chapter therefore exposes the fractures within the Old Commonwealth, which determined the extent to which Canada, Australia, and New Zealand were prepared to become involved in the Rhodesian Crisis.⁴⁶

Chapter Four argues that despite the problems of racialism, the Commonwealth dimension of the Rhodesian Crisis should not be interpreted simply as an unwelcome complicating factor, because there were expectations in several quarters that the Old

⁴⁵ See also Carl P. Watts, 'The Old Commonwealth and the Problem of Rhodesian Independence, 1964-5', *Cold War History* (forthcoming, 2007).

⁴⁶ The main records series used are: TNA: PRO, DO 183. The National Archives of Canada, Ottawa [hereafter NAC]: RG 25, Department of External Affairs [hereafter DEA], Series A-3-c [most files relating to Southern Rhodesia are in Vols. 8985-8987, but these were only declassified in January 2006 and therefore could not be incorporated within the thesis, which was in an advanced state by that time]; MG 31-E47, Records of Arnold Cantwell Smith, External Affairs Series. National Archives of Australia, Canberra [hereafter NAA]: A1209, Prime Minister's Department, Correspondence files, annual single number series (classified); A1838, Department of External Affairs, Central Office, Correspondence files, multiple number series; A5828, Eighth Menzies Administration – Cabinet Files (Folders of Decisions of Cabinet and Cabinet Committees). Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga, Head Office, Wellington [hereafter ANZ]: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade – Head Office, Series 950, Accession W4627.

Commonwealth could play a modest role in the management of the Rhodesian problem. Although Britain consistently reaffirmed its sole responsibility for bringing Rhodesia to independence, it nevertheless looked to its Old Commonwealth partners to make a constructive contribution in maintaining positive relations with the Rhodesian Government and the wider Commonwealth. Harold Wilson followed the precedent established by his Conservative predecessors of consulting with the Old Commonwealth Prime Ministers about the handling of the Rhodesian problem. Wilson ensured that they were kept informed of developments in the negotiations between Britain and Rhodesia, urged them to dissuade Ian Smith from a UDI, and looked to them for help in assuaging Afro-Asian criticism of British policy. It was not only the British Government that entertained hopes and expectations that the Old Commonwealth could ward off a UDI. European moderates in Rhodesia approached the British Government and the Old Commonwealth to suggest that greater Commonwealth cooperation was needed in helping to find a solution to the Rhodesian problem.⁴⁷ Some officials in the U.S. State Department also thought that the Old Commonwealth had a role to play and suggested that Rhodesia was most open to the influence of Australia and New Zealand.⁴⁸ Similarly, some African governments and African nationalists in Rhodesia regarded Australia as the member of the Commonwealth that was potentially most influential.⁴⁹ Yet it was the

⁴⁷ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 9, Garfield Todd and Hardwicke Holderness to Keith Holyoake, 9 June 1964, enclosing a copy of a letter from Todd and Holderness to Sir Alec Douglas-Home, 15 May 1964.

⁴⁸ NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 3a, Australian Embassy, Washington, to Department of External Affairs, Canberra, Savingram 1284, 30 October 1964.

⁴⁹ TNA: PRO, DO 183/324, E. V. Vines, British High Commission, Dar Es Salaam, to D. F. B. Le Breton, UN and General Africa Department, CRO, London, Letter, 3 February 1964. Vines reported a visit by Ralph Harry, Australian Department of External Affairs, to several African states including Tanganyika.

Canadian Government that was most active on the Rhodesian problem. Canadian politicians and officials pursued several initiatives during 1964 and 1965 in the hope of inducing greater cooperation from the Rhodesian Government and preventing a UDI. In Australia and New Zealand, however, the prevailing attitudes moderated the degree of support that they were prepared to give to Canadian initiatives. The major conclusion of Chapter Four is that if Britain and the Old Commonwealth had acted in concert to a greater degree, especially in providing inducements to greater cooperation on the part of the Rhodesian Government, it might have been possible to avert a UDI.

Chapter Five broadens the discussion of the Commonwealth dimension by firstly examining the reasons why the Rhodesian Government resisted Commonwealth interference in, or advice about, Rhodesian constitutional development. The chapter argues that the attitudes of the Rhodesian Front towards the Commonwealth were similar to those of many Australian and New Zealand politicians and civil servants. Yet despite the Rhodesian Government's disdain for the principle of multiracialism, paradoxically it still claimed to be a member of the Commonwealth, and sought to obtain the support of the Old Commonwealth against the vociferous criticism articulated by the African member states against Rhodesia. This contributed to Britain's difficulties in trying to manage the Rhodesian Crisis, especially in the context of the 1964 and 1965 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meetings. The chapter examines the growing restlessness of the African Commonwealth members in advance of these Meetings, and

Le Breton replied, 'It is interesting to note how both Kambona [Tanganyikan Foreign Minister] and Sithole [Leader of the Zimbabwe African National Union] regard the Australians as the best channel for exerting influence on Field and his Government and also on ourselves.' Le Breton, CRO, to P. A. Carter, British High Commission, Dar Es Salaam, Letter, 25 February 1964.

observes how Ghana in particular was relentless in drawing attention to the worsening situation in Rhodesia. The major purpose of Chapter Five is to explain why contemporary fears that the Rhodesian Crisis would precipitate the dissolution of the Commonwealth did not come to pass.

Part Three: The United States and the Rhodesian Crisis

The prominence of the United States in British contingency planning to deal with UDI suggests that it was, in effect, a 'fifth constituency' in Wilson's calculations. Yet the Rhodesian Crisis has attracted only moderate interest among scholars of U.S. policy towards Africa, and academics in the field of Anglo-American relations have tended to focus on other aspects of the Wilson-Johnson period, particularly Vietnam.⁵⁰ There is some merit in linking the Rhodesian problem with Vietnam, since American co-operation

⁵⁰ Excellent studies within the bounds of U.S. archival sources include Andrew DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome: The United States and Zimbabwe, 1953–1998* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2001); and Thomas J. Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation: The United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948–1968* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985). Some recent examples of the continuing significance of Vietnam in the historiography of Anglo-American relations during the Wilson-Johnson period are: Sylvia Ellis, *Britain, America, and the Vietnam War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004); Kevin Boyle, 'The Price of Peace: Vietnam, the Pound, and the Crisis of the American Empire', *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (January 2003), pp. 37-72; and Wm. Roger Louis, 'The Dissolution of the British Empire in the Era of Vietnam', *American Historical Review*, Vol. 107, No. 2 (February 2002), pp. 1-25. Scholars have also recently paid more attention to Anglo-American defence relations during this period. See, for example, Saki Dockrill, 'Forging the Anglo-American Global Defence Partnership: Harold Wilson, Lyndon Johnson and the Washington Summit, December 1964', *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (December 2000), pp. 107-29; and Andrew J. Priest, 'In American Hands: Britain, the United States and the Polaris Nuclear Project, 1962–1968', *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (September 2005), pp. 353-76.

on the former partly explains why the British Government felt compelled to support American involvement in the latter.⁵¹ However, in Chapter Six it is argued that the Rhodesian Crisis deserves to be considered as a separate issue because it reveals a great deal about the nature of Anglo-American relations during the Wilson-Johnson era and therefore adds to the literature on the special relationship, which until recently marginalised the significance of this period.⁵² One weakness of the existing American literature on the Rhodesian Crisis (aside from being sparse) is that it has, on the whole, utilised only those archival sources most readily accessible in the United States, such as those in the National Archives, Washington, and the Lyndon B. Johnson Library, Texas.⁵³ Whilst these sources give a good indication of views within the Johnson administration, they do not provide a comprehensive understanding of how misunderstandings surfaced in Anglo-American relations as a result of the Rhodesian Crisis. Chapter Six therefore seeks to provide a fuller understanding by adopting a multi-archival approach, using sources from American archives in conjunction with sources from British and New Zealand archives. The use of New Zealand archival sources in this context may seem

⁵¹ Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, p. 382.

⁵² Limited regard for the significance of the Wilson-Johnson era is evident, for example, in J. Dickie, *'Special' No More. Anglo-American Relations: Rhetoric and Rivalry* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1994); D. Dimpleby and D. J. Reynolds, *An Ocean Apart: The Relationship Between Britain and America in the Twentieth Century* (London: BBC Books, 1988); and Wm. R. Louis and H. Bull (eds.) *The 'Special Relationship': Anglo-American Relations Since 1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986). Donald Cameron Watt went so far as to argue that: 'Anglo-American relations in this period were characterised by their absence.' *Succeeding John Bull: America in Britain's Place, 1900–1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 146.

⁵³ One book informed by a multi-national, multi-archival approach is Gerald Horne, *From the Barrel of a Gun: The United States and the War Against Zimbabwe, 1965–1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

surprising, but as a result of regular briefings by officials in the State Department's Office of Eastern and Southern African Affairs, the New Zealand Embassy in Washington was often better informed about developments in U.S. policy than the British diplomatic establishment. The memoranda and cables from the New Zealand Embassy therefore provide a valuable insight into Anglo-American relations during 1964 and 1965.⁵⁴ The chapter explores Anglo-American consultation in great detail, observing the considerable misperception and miscommunication between Washington and London, which caused disappointment and even suspicion at senior levels of government on both sides. The chapter explains the misunderstandings and frustrations in Anglo-American relations by applying some important theoretical perspectives on alliance politics, which are usually neglected by historians.⁵⁵ The chapter demonstrates that there were serious structural problems in the special relationship, which had not been corrected since the Suez and Skybolt crises. Again, this makes a distinctive contribution to current scholarship.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ The utility of the New Zealand Archives for this part of the thesis was an accidental find during the course of research on the Commonwealth and the Rhodesian problem.

⁵⁵ None of the studies mentioned above employ a theoretical framework for analysing the significance of the Rhodesian problem in Anglo-American relations. Theoretical approaches to Anglo-American relations can of course be found in international relations journals, for example: Raymond Dawson and Richard Rosecrance, 'Theory and Reality in the Anglo-American Alliance', *World Politics*, Vol. XIX, No. 1 (October 1966), pp. 21-51; and John Baylis, 'The Anglo-American Relationship and Alliance Theory', *International Relations*, Vol. 8 (November 1985), pp. 368-79. Richard Neustadt, *Alliance Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), was a seminal study and I have used Neustadt's theories extensively in my analysis. Neustadt's theories are tested in Louise Richardson, *When Allies Differ: Anglo-American Relations During the Suez and Falklands Crises* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).

⁵⁶ See Carl P. Watts, 'The United States, Britain, and the Problem of Rhodesian Independence, 1964-1965', *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (forthcoming, June 2006), pp. 439-70.

Chapter Seven examines the making of U.S. policy on Rhodesia from the perspectives of bureaucratic politics and pluralism. It argues that the U.S. position was conflicted because the desire to counter Communist subversion and infiltration in southern Africa (by tacitly supporting the so-called ‘white redoubt’) did not sit comfortably with the need to assuage U.S. domestic opinion on the sensitive matter of racial discrimination. These incompatible objectives, combined with conflicting departmental interests, generated extended, well-documented bureaucratic contests. The Rhodesian Crisis therefore illuminates the process of policymaking in the Johnson administration. The chapter examines the policymaking process from the point of view of G. Mennen Williams, a former Governor of the State of Michigan with a strong record on civil rights, who was Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs between 1961 and 1966.⁵⁷ The chapter demonstrates that Williams argued a strong case for greater U.S. involvement in the Rhodesian Crisis based on strategic and moral factors. However, Williams was ultimately unsuccessful due to implacable opposition from the highest levels of the Johnson administration. Chapter Seven also explains the limited influence of pluralist pressures on U.S. policy towards Rhodesia. It argues that although there was some connection between the domestic civil rights campaign and foreign policy issues like white minority rule in South Africa and Rhodesia, this never became fully and effectively developed. African-American interest groups lacked the knowledge and the political skills necessary to wield sufficient influence in Washington, and the White House was hostile to the development of a separate African-American voice in U.S. foreign policy. The chapter

⁵⁷ See Carl P. Watts, ‘G. Mennen Williams and Rhodesian Independence: A Case Study in Bureaucratic Politics’, *Michigan Academician*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 3 (2004), pp. 225-46; and Thomas J. Noer, *Soapy: A Biography of G. Mennen Williams* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005). Both studies are based on the under-utilised G. Mennen Williams papers deposited at the Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

therefore contributes to the recent literature on the linkage between U.S. domestic and foreign policies in the 1960s.⁵⁸

Conclusions

Two underlying themes run throughout this thesis. First, it argues that although the problem of Rhodesian independence was highly complex, a UDI was by no means inevitable. There were courses of action that were dismissed or remained under explored (especially in Britain, but also in the Old Commonwealth, and the United States), which could have been pursued further and may have prevented a UDI. Second, the thesis argues there were obvious structural weaknesses in the machinery of government of each of the major actors, but particularly in Britain, which of course bore primary responsibility for Rhodesia. This made the management of the Rhodesian Crisis more difficult, contributed to the likelihood of a UDI, and exacerbated tension in relations between Britain and its international partners. In stressing these themes the thesis is therefore closer to some of the earlier critical literature on Wilson's handling of the Rhodesian Crisis than it is to the more recent sympathetic revisionist literature.

⁵⁸ See Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American race relations in the global arena* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); and Michael L. Krenn, *Black Diplomacy: African Americans and the State Department 1945-1969* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1999).

PART ONE

BRITAIN AND THE RHODESIAN CRISIS, 1964-65

Chapter One

The Labour Government and the Rhodesian Crisis

Introduction

Between the formation of the Central African Federation in 1953 and its dissolution ten years later, the Labour Party maintained a continuous record of opposition to white minority rule in the Federation as a whole and in Southern Rhodesia. When the Labour Government took office in October 1964, it initially adopted a public position on the issue of Rhodesian independence that was consistent with the principles that the Party and Harold Wilson had articulated whilst in Opposition. Privately, however, Wilson and his Government were prepared to compromise the principle of immediate African majority rule in Rhodesia, which reflected their belief that this was the only realistic way that a settlement might be achieved. Negotiations with the Rhodesian Government ‘were essentially aimed at finding a formula which would enable Britain to grant independence on the basis of white minority rule but with some form of guarantee that at some future date black majority rule would be achieved.’¹ Although the British Government remained publicly optimistic that a settlement was possible – and Wilson and his ministers expended tremendous effort in their negotiations with the Rhodesian Front – in private it was accepted that a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) was highly likely. The British Government decided at a very early stage that it would not use force to prevent or terminate a UDI. Ministers and their officials therefore became engaged in an enormously complex contingency planning operation to deal with the huge range of

¹ Clive Ponting, *Breach of Promise: Labour in Power, 1964-1970* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989), p. 140.

domestic and foreign consequences associated with a UDI. The effectiveness of this operation was undermined by a range of factors: the number of different committees that were involved; a tendency to defer important decisions; and bureaucratic conflict between the Foreign Office and the Commonwealth Relations Office, which reflected their differing interests and conceptions of how best to respond to a UDI. This chapter therefore argues that although considerable time and effort went into the making of Labour's Rhodesian policy, the end result was largely ineffective.

Labour's Rhodesian policy in Opposition

Before examining the Rhodesian policy of the Labour Government elected in October 1964 it is necessary to analyse the Party's policy whilst in Opposition during the preceding thirteen years, which encompass the life and death of the Central African Federation. In his study of the domestic consequences of decolonisation Miles Kahler has commented:

The question of the Central African Federation, endorsed by the Conservative Government, brought to the fore the question of settler power and racial inequality that had aroused the Labour left during the Seretse Khama case. More significantly, it *unified* the Labour Left and Right in opposition.²

² Miles Kahler, *Decolonization in Britain and France. The Domestic Consequences of International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 244. For details of the Seretse Khama case and the dissent that this caused in the Labour Party see *ibid.*, pp. 238-41.

The following discussion suggests that this is an accurate assessment, but it must be qualified by observing that some Labour MPs and officials became more equivocal in their attitudes towards the Central African Federation and the future of Southern Rhodesia during the months preceding Labour's return to office in October 1964. Yet Harold Wilson, who quickly came to dominate Labour's Rhodesian policy after he was elected Party leader in 1963, demonstrated that he was somewhat out of step with the increasingly cautious approach of some of his colleagues.

In June 1951, the Attlee Government published a report on closer association between Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia, and Southern Rhodesia. Under pressure from the Fabian Colonial Bureau, the Labour Party accepted that any arrangements for closer association should deliver not only economic advantages but also political advancement for the African majority in those territories.³ It was the absence of the latter that prompted the Labour Party to oppose the Conservative Government's plans to establish the Central African Federation in 1953. James Griffiths, Labour's former Colonial Secretary, highlighted the undesirability of white minority power, which was assured by the adoption of the Southern Rhodesian franchise for the Federation as a whole. Some right-wing Labour MPs abstained in the vote, including Patrick Gordon Walker and George Brown, because they accepted the arguments that the Federation would bring economic benefits and forestall the growth of South African influence in the region.⁴ Harold Wilson voted with the majority of Labour MPs against the creation of the Federation, but

³ Ibid., p. 245.

⁴ Ibid.

he did not raise the issue outside Parliament.⁵ Throughout the 1950s the Labour Party supported the African nationalists in their aspirations for greater democracy in the Federation, but ‘The party was slow to accept a right of secession by the African states [Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia] at the time of constitutional review, scheduled in 1960.’⁶ In 1959, however, rioting broke out in Nyasaland and the Labour Party was very vocal in criticising the Federal authorities for brutally suppressing the rioting and arresting prominent African nationalists. When the Conservatives established the Monckton Commission to investigate the future of the Federation the Labour leader, Hugh Gaitskell, sought to widen the Commission’s terms of reference to include the right of secession. This was a clear indication that the Labour leader was prepared to stare-down the white minority in the Federation, and there was little dissent over this position within the Party.⁷ Wilson, who was at that time Shadow Chancellor, continued to support the Party line but once again did not address the issue in his constituency.⁸

The next key development was British affirmation of the 1961 Southern Rhodesian Constitution. Wilson recalled in his memoirs that it was ‘passed by the British Parliament in a highly controversial atmosphere. The Labour Party had voted solidly against it.’⁹ The Labour Party believed that the 1961 Constitution did not contain adequate safeguards

⁵ Paul Foot, *The Politics of Harold Wilson* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p. 258; and Robert C. Good, *UDI: The International Politics of the Rhodesian Rebellion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 47.

⁶ Kahler, *Decolonization in Britain and France*, p. 248.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 248-49.

⁸ Foot, *The Politics of Harold Wilson*, pp. 258-59.

⁹ Harold Wilson, *The Labour Government, 1964-70* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, and Michael Joseph, 1971), p. 22.

for the African population in Southern Rhodesia. James Callaghan warned with great prescience that the British Government was taking a major risk in passing its reserve powers to a territory that might elect a party that was representative of extremist white interests.¹⁰ In March 1963, shortly after Wilson became leader of the Labour Party, he gave a clear indication of the action that a future Labour Government would take:

We have said that no constitution is defensible which fails to allow the people of those territories to control their own destinies. We have bitterly attacked the Southern Rhodesian constitution for that, and a Labour Government would therefore alter it – let me make that very very plain.¹¹

Wilson reiterated this position during a speech on foreign affairs at the 1963 Labour Party Conference in Scarborough, in which he went even further in proposing how the future of Southern Rhodesia should be handled:

You now face the ultimate decision in Southern Rhodesia. We insist, as we have repeatedly insisted, that Britain cannot morally confer independence on a Southern Rhodesia which defies the most elemental claims of democracy by denying the vote to 99% of the Africans who outnumber the Europeans by 15 to 1. We say, too, to the Government, your debts are too great, your moral reserves too low, the problem of

¹⁰ Callaghan recalled Keir Hardie's speech against the South Africa Bill in 1909. *House of Commons Debates*, Vol. 642, Col. 1808, 22 June 1961. Cited in Elaine Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), pp. 43-44.

¹¹ Cited in Foot, *The Politics of Harold Wilson*, p. 259; Good, *UDI*, p. 47; and Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, p. 30.

Central Africa can no longer be dealt with on a unilateralist basis, it must now be referred to the arbitration and good offices of a Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference.¹²

These statements reflected not only the convictions of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP), but also the views of some Labour constituencies, which were worried by developments in Southern Rhodesia and anxious to secure a commitment by the Labour leadership to do something to prevent the white minority from further consolidating their dominant position.¹³ The National Executive Committee (NEC) fully supported the demand of the PLP that Southern Rhodesia should not be granted independence until 'genuine representative government' was established.¹⁴

The Labour Party was also highly critical of the Conservative Government's handling of the dissolution of the Central African Federation. At the Victoria Falls conference in June 1963 Winston Field and Ian Smith were unsuccessful in their bid to obtain a British commitment to confer independence on Southern Rhodesia, but they did manage to

¹² Harold Wilson, *Purpose in Politics. Selected Speeches by the Rt. Hon. Harold Wilson* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), p. 10. The reference to Commonwealth involvement would have alarmed the Rhodesian Government because it was extremely resistant to Commonwealth interference in Rhodesian domestic affairs (which is discussed below, in Chs. 4 and 5).

¹³ National Museum of Labour History, Manchester [hereafter NMLH]: Departmental Correspondence, Commonwealth Papers, Southern Rhodesia, Correspondence, 1961-1969 [hereafter Southern Rhodesia, Correspondence], Resolution of the General Management Committee of Hornchurch CLP, March 1963; Resolution of South Paddington Divisional Labour Party, April 1963.

¹⁴ NMLH: Southern Rhodesia, Correspondence, David Ennals, Secretary, Overseas Department, National Executive Committee, to Councillor W. Dow, Hon. Secretary, South Paddington Divisional Labour Party, 23 April 1963.

secure the bulk of the Federal military forces. Robert Holland has acknowledged: ‘This is what really mattered to them, because it put the R[hodesian] F[ront] leadership in a position to threaten a unilateral declaration of independence.’¹⁵ Of course, if the Rhodesian Front leadership could see this, so could their opponents in Rhodesia, Africa, and Britain. Labour’s NEC expressed its concern that the transfer of Federal military assets to Southern Rhodesia would inflame the already dangerous situation in central Africa, and Labour MPs also pointed out that the decision to transfer Federal forces to Southern Rhodesia put Britain in violation of a request by the UN General Assembly not to do so.¹⁶ Yet Labour’s public position masked some doubts about the issue. George Cunningham, an adviser in the Labour Party Overseas Department, pointed out that there were a number of reasons why the Southern Rhodesian Government had a good claim to the Federal armed forces. First, Southern Rhodesia had contributed the majority of the armed forces to the Federation and it was therefore logical that they should revert to Southern Rhodesia. Second, only the Southern Rhodesians were competent to use the more sophisticated military equipment operated by the armed forces. Third, as the troops and equipment were already in Southern Rhodesia, ‘it would be impossible for Britain to remove them or disband the troops without interfering in a major way in Southern Rhodesian affairs.’ Finally, the greater part of the cost of the forces had been borne by the Southern Rhodesian Government and not by the northern territories. Cunningham concluded: ‘By every kind of logic, therefore, Southern Rhodesia has the prior claim and I cannot see the Conservative Government doing anything about this point and, quite

¹⁵ Robert F. Holland, *European Decolonization 1918-1981: An Introductory Survey* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985), p. 233.

¹⁶ Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, pp. 15-16. See also NMLH: Southern Rhodesia, Documents, 1963-1966, NEC Statement on Southern Rhodesia, 23 October 1963.

frankly, I can't see that we would be able to do anything different if we were in power.'¹⁷ This kind of pragmatism became highly characteristic of the Labour Party's Rhodesian policy once it was in power after October 1964, especially in relation to the question of using force to impose a settlement in Rhodesia.

Indeed, there is some evidence that Labour MPs and Party officials became more cautious in dealing with the Rhodesian issue during the period leading up to the 1964 General Election. In March 1964 the Africa Bureau discussed the possible action that a future Labour Government might take to solve the problem of Rhodesian independence.¹⁸ Some members of the Bureau argued that talk of a UDI had been stimulated by Rhodesian European fears that a Labour Government would not observe the convention of non-intervention in Rhodesia's internal affairs. It was therefore suggested that the Labour Party should declare that its approach would not be different to that of the Conservative Government. Lord Walston, who became Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs, doubted the wisdom of this. He said that if the Labour Party did form the next Government it would not wish to be 'unnecessarily hampered' by previous declarations.¹⁹ Similarly, in July 1964 George Cunningham advised the NEC: 'it is important not to allow ourselves to be steamrollered into initiatives which do not solve

¹⁷ NMLH: Southern Rhodesia, Correspondence, George Cunningham to Arthur Bottomley, 13 September 1963.

¹⁸ The Africa Bureau was founded in 1952, 'to advise and support Africans who wished to oppose by constitutional means political decisions affecting their lives and futures imposed by alien governments.' P. M. Pugh, *The Papers of the Africa Bureau* (Oxford, 1980), p. 1.

¹⁹ Rhodes House Library, Oxford [hereafter RHL]: Papers of the Africa Bureau, MSS Afr. s1681, Box 255, File 1, 'Private Discussion on Southern Rhodesia: Notes on the discussion which took place at Chatham House on Monday 23rd March 1964', pp. 3-4.

the problem and may react to our detriment.’²⁰ Against this background of increasing caution it is difficult to comprehend why, just two weeks before the 1964 General Election, Harold Wilson entered into an explicit commitment to bring about African majority rule in Rhodesia. When Dr E. Mutasa, a member of the Rhodesian Committee against European Independence, enquired about Labour’s Rhodesian policy, Wilson gave an unequivocal response: ‘The Labour Party is totally opposed to granting independence to Southern Rhodesia so long as the Government of the country remains under a white minority.’²¹ This comment was obviously compatible with Wilson’s previous statements on the Rhodesian issue, but it was at variance with the more reserved approach of others in the Labour Party during 1964. It has been suggested that the Mutasa letter ‘was a vast hostage to fortune and, although in practice Wilson departed totally from this commitment, the existence of the letter, which was never formally repudiated, was to be a continuing strain in the relationship between Smith and Wilson.’²² The early correspondence between Smith and Wilson demonstrates that this is a fair comment.²³ From the very beginning the Rhodesian policy of the Labour Government was conflicted. Labour’s pre-existing commitment to granting independence to Rhodesia on the basis of African majority rule was incompatible with its public assurances that it had no pre-conceived ideas about the formula for independence. Wilson’s hope for a negotiated

²⁰ NMLH: Southern Rhodesia, Documents, 1963-1966, George Cunningham, ‘Southern Rhodesia’, paper number OV/1963-64/29, 21 July 1964.

²¹ Quoted in Foot, *The Politics of Harold Wilson*, p 259; Good, *UDI*, p. 47; and Windrich, p. 31.

²² Miles Hudson, *Triumph or Tragedy? Rhodesia to Zimbabwe* (London: Hamilton, 1982), p. 46.

²³ See the exchanges during November and December 1964 in Cmnd. 2807, *Southern Rhodesia: documents relating to the negotiations between the United Kingdom and Southern Rhodesian Governments November 1963 – November 1965* (London: HMSO, 1965), pp. 47-51.

settlement therefore never looked likely, despite the lengths to which he was prepared to go to try to achieve it.

The Rhodesian policy of the Labour Government

Cunningham feared that the possibility of a UDI before or during the general election ‘would mean a Labour government would inherit a situation from which it would be almost impossible to emerge with credit.’²⁴ Cunningham’s analysis was prescient in the long-term, but in the short-term his fears did not transpire. When the Labour Government was elected in October it acted resolutely to thwart a possible UDI and in the process gained considerable credit. In September Ian Smith visited London for talks with the Conservative Prime Minister, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, and the Commonwealth Secretary, Duncan Sandys.²⁵ When Smith returned to Salisbury the Rhodesian Government ‘sedulously fostered’ the impression that ‘a bargain was arrived at during Smith’s talks in London’.²⁶ This was clearly at odds with the communiqué issued by the Conservative Government, in which it reserved its position on Smith’s claim that the majority of the

²⁴ NMLH: Southern Rhodesia, Documents, 1963-1966, George Cunningham, ‘Southern Rhodesia’, paper number OV/1963-64/29, 21 July 1964.

²⁵ See Cmnd. 2807, pp. 21-38.

²⁶ The National Archives [hereafter TNA]: Public Records Office, Kew [hereafter PRO], PREM 13/85, J. B. Johnston, British High Commissioner, Salisbury, to Commonwealth Relations Office [hereafter CRO], 16 October 1964. Quoted in Alan Megahey, *Humphrey Gibbs: Beleaguered Governor* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), p. 91. Similarly, Group Captain H. G. Slade, RAF Liaison Officer in Salisbury, wrote that Rhodesians hailed the communiqué ‘as evidence of a resounding political victory by Mr Smith.’ Slade thought that the Rhodesians were, by this point, clearly delusional. TNA: PRO, AIR 20/11189, Slade to Air Vice Marshal Peter Fletcher, 23 October 1964, p. 2

Rhodesian population supported his request for independence on the basis of the 1961 Constitution. The communiqué made it clear that: ‘the British Government must be satisfied that any basis on which it was proposed that independence should be granted was acceptable to the people of the country as a whole.’²⁷ In an attempt to fulfil this criteria Smith proposed to stage an *indaba* of the African Chiefs (who were appointed by the Rhodesian Government) and a referendum of the white population. On 15 October, general election day in Britain, Sandys advised Smith that his proposal for an *indaba* was inadequate, and rejected his invitation to send observers because this would be ‘interpreted as implying a commitment on the part of the British Government to accepting your consultations as representing the opinion of the people as a whole.’²⁸ On 19 October the new Commonwealth Secretary, Arthur Bottomley, wrote what Harold Wilson later described as ‘a stiff letter’ confirming that the Labour Government took the view that an *indaba* would be an insufficient demonstration of Rhodesian opinion as a whole.²⁹ Nevertheless, Ian Smith pressed ahead with his plans. An *indaba* was held, beginning on 22 October, and after a display by the Royal Rhodesian Air Force (which may be interpreted either as entertainment or as intimidation) the 622 African Chiefs voted ‘yes’ to the Government’s proposals for independence.³⁰ A referendum of the white electorate was held on 5 November. With only a 60 per cent turnout, 58,000 voted in favour of independence on the basis of the 1961 Constitution and 6,000 against.³¹ Smith’s

²⁷ ‘Joint Communiqué issued after the talks between the Prime Minister and Mr Ian Smith, Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia’, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 38-39.

²⁸ Ian Smith to J. B. Johnston, British High Commissioner, Salisbury, 14 October 1964; and Johnston to Smith, 15 October 1964, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 39-41.

²⁹ Wilson, *The Labour Government*, p. 24. Bottomley to Smith, 19 October 1964, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 41-42.

³⁰ Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, pp. 25-26.

³¹ Megahey, *Humphrey Gibbs*, p. 92.

determination to demonstrate – on his own terms – that the Rhodesian population wanted independence on the basis of the 1961 Constitution alarmed the Labour Government, and forced it to take a strong public position at an early stage in its dealings with Rhodesia.

In his second letter to Smith, Arthur Bottomley indicated his ‘serious concern’ about the Rhodesian Government’s intent to stage an *indaba*, and reiterated the British Government’s view that it could not regard this form of consultation as satisfactory.³² Bottomley acknowledged that it was difficult for the new Labour Government ‘immediately upon taking office to be confronted with a problem of this character.’ He proposed to discuss the situation with Smith by visiting Rhodesia after he attended Zambia’s independence celebrations, arriving in Salisbury on 26 October. Bottomley also asked Smith to make arrangements for him to meet with the African nationalist leaders Joshua Nkomo and Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole.³³ On 21 October, Bottomley presented a paper to a meeting of the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee (DOPC), which warned that the British Government was ‘on a collision course with the Government of Rhodesia’, and Bottomley advised ministers that ‘the only way of preventing rebellion in Southern Rhodesia was to warn Mr Smith in blunt terms of the

³² Bottomley to Smith, 19 October 1964, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 41-42.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 42. Rhodesian liberation movements were deeply divided, which diminished their effectiveness in Rhodesia and undermined their support in the West. In 1961 Joshua Nkomo organized the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) to replace the National Democratic Party, which had been banned by the Federal Government. In 1962 ZAPU turned to violence and was also banned. Some members of ZAPU – especially the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole and Robert Mugabe – were critical of the amount of time that Nkomo spent abroad. In August 1963 they formed the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), which sparked a violent confrontation between the rival groups. Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, pp. 23-24.

consequences'.³⁴ Ministers discussed a draft statement for this purpose and agreed that if Smith did not consent to Bottomley's condition that he should be allowed to see whomever he wished, the statement should be made public.³⁵ Smith later wrote that he was incensed Bottomley wished to see Nkomo and Sithole at a time when they were in restriction because of their 'criminal activities', and was amazed 'that there could be such a lack of sensitivity from a British minister' at a time when 'the nationalist thugs were intimidating and murdering innocent people.'³⁶ Tension escalated further whilst Bottomley was in Lusaka because the British Government received reports that suggested a UDI was imminent.³⁷ The Cabinet therefore agreed that the Prime Minister should invite Smith to London and, if Smith refused, he would be asked for a categorical assurance that the Rhodesian Government was not contemplating any unilateral action. If Smith would not give such an assurance the British Government would send a statement to Salisbury warning of the consequences of a UDI and, if Smith did not respond, the British Government would then make the statement public on 27 October.³⁸ This is

³⁴ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/17, OPD (64) 2, 'Memorandum by Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations'; and Minutes of OPD (64) 1st Meeting, 21 October 1964, p. 5.

³⁵ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/17, Minutes of OPD (64) 1st Meeting, 21 October 1964, pp. 5-6.

³⁶ Ian Douglas Smith, *Bitter Harvest: The Great Betrayal and the Dreadful Aftermath* (London: Blake, 2001), p. 82.

³⁷ TNA: PRO, PREM 13/85, J. B. Johnston, British High Commissioner, Salisbury, to Sir Saville Garner or Sir Arthur Snelling, CRO, Cable No. 1397, 23 October 1964, in Philip Murphy (ed.), *British Documents on the End of Empire Project* [hereafter *BDEEP*] *Series B, Volume 9, Central Africa, Part II: Crisis and Dissolution 1959-1965* (London: The Stationery Office, 2005), pp. 490-91.

³⁸ TNA: PRO, CAB 128/39, CC 2 (64) 2, 22 October 1964.

exactly how events unfolded.³⁹ Smith declined the invitation to go to London because he was in the middle of his referendum campaign. In his memoirs Smith recalled that he chose not to reply to the British Government's ultimatum because: 'This kind of behaviour was completely out of keeping with the accepted code of conduct between members of the Commonwealth and was entirely unprovoked on my part.'⁴⁰ Smith may have found the ultimatum distasteful, but he ought to have recognised that the British Government was genuinely concerned about the prospect of a UDI and that failure to reply would exacerbate the tension in relations between London and Salisbury. In the absence of a response from Smith the British Government's warning statement 'was issued from 10 Downing Street at 6 a.m. on the morning of the 27th, 8 a.m. in Rhodesia, where it would be heard on every car radio.'⁴¹ It observed that reports of a possible UDI had prompted the necessity of a statement warning of the consequences. The statement made it clear that only the British Government could grant independence and would do so only when satisfied that this would be acceptable to the people of Rhodesia as a whole. It warned that a UDI would have no legal effect, it would be an open act of rebellion and it would be treasonable to attempt to give effect to such a declaration. The British Government would sever relations with the Rhodesian Government and Rhodesians would cease to be British subjects. The economic effects on Rhodesia would be

³⁹ An ad hoc committee, chaired by Wilson, finalised the warning statement. TNA: PRO, CAB 130/206, Minutes of Meeting, 23 October 1964. See also Wilson to Smith, 23 October 1964; Smith to Wilson, 24 October 1964; and Wilson to Smith, 24 October 1964; Cmnd. 2807, pp. 42-43.

⁴⁰ Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, p. 83.

⁴¹ Wilson, *The Labour Government*, p. 25. Smith was due to debate a motion in the Rhodesian Legislative Assembly on 27 October, which the British Government feared could be the occasion of a UDI. J. R. T. Wood, *'So far and no further!' Rhodesia's bid for independence during the retreat from empire 1959-1965* (Victoria, BC: Trafford, 2005), p. 245.

disastrous; all financial and trade relations with Britain would be frozen and Rhodesia's trade with the rest of the world would be disrupted. The statement also warned that Rhodesia would be isolated diplomatically. Membership of the Commonwealth would be out of the question and, with one or two exceptions, foreign governments would not confer diplomatic recognition on the illegal regime, but might recognise a government-in-exile if one were established.⁴²

How successful was the Labour Government's early handling of the Salisbury regime? In a study published two years after UDI, Kenneth Young wrote that the warning statement was unnecessary. Young attributed it to the fact that Wilson's position was precarious and he wanted 'to make some emphatic, powerful gesture as a symbol of leadership'.⁴³ Smith suggested in his memoirs that the statement was an unsuccessful attempt to swing electoral support away from the Rhodesian Front in the forthcoming referendum, which constituted a breach in the constitutional convention of non-interference in Rhodesia's domestic affairs. He commented: 'If I were searching for reasons to support a UDI they [British ministers] were making a positive contribution.'⁴⁴ Similarly, in a recent analysis Richard Wood implied that the statement was futile: 'If Wilson was hoping to cow Ian Smith, he had misjudged his man.'⁴⁵ Yet the Labour Government's warning was clearly very effective in several respects. First, it drew grudging support from the Conservative Party. During the debate on the Queen's Speech, on 3 November 1964, Sir Alec

⁴² TNA: PRO, CAB 130/206, Minutes, 23 October 1964; Wilson, *The Labour Government*, p. 25; and Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, pp. 32-33.

⁴³ Kenneth Young, *Rhodesia and Independence: A Study in British Colonial Policy* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1967) p. 168.

⁴⁴ Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, p. 83.

⁴⁵ Wood, 'So far and no further!', p. 245.

Douglas-Home described the language in the statement as ‘rough, but right.’⁴⁶ This meant that Wilson had successfully established a bi-partisan approach on the Rhodesian issue at an early stage in his tenure of office, which made it more difficult for Home’s successor, Edward Heath, to deviate from supporting Wilson’s policy later on. Shortly before UDI, Heath contested exactly what Home had said in the House of Commons almost a year before.⁴⁷ Wilson wrote to Heath citing several written sources that confirmed Home had said the Labour Government’s warning statement had been ‘right’. Wilson stressed that this mattered because:

[T]here is a feeling growing in the country – and abroad – that your Party may be re-thinking their attitude both about the points so strongly made by Sir Alec to Mr Smith in September 1964, and about the issue of the economic consequences that it was thought all of us agreed must follow an illegal and Unilateral Declaration of Independence.⁴⁸

A second reason why the statement may be regarded as successful is that ‘it heartened the African nationalists in Rhodesia, who regarded it as a portent of better things to come so far as they were concerned.’⁴⁹ Third, the statement provided the British delegation at the United Nations with a document that it could present to the UN Special Committee on

⁴⁶ Wilson, *The Labour Government*, p. 25.

⁴⁷ British Library of Political and Economic Science [hereafter BLPES]: Papers of George Edward Cecil Wigg [hereafter Wigg Papers], WIGG 4/13, ‘Rhodesia: Right and Rough Affair’.

⁴⁸ BLPES: Wigg Papers, WIGG 4/13, ‘Rhodesia: Right and Rough Affair’, Wilson to Heath, 26 October 1965. Wilson wrote from Government House, Salisbury, where he had gone for a further round of negotiations in a desperate attempt to prevent a UDI.

⁴⁹ Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, p. 33.

Decolonisation, which in March 1964 had demanded the British Government: ‘warn the minority settler government against the consequences of a unilateral declaration of independence’.⁵⁰ Fourth, the British statement gave the Commonwealth and the United States – whom the British Government regarded as essential partners in its efforts to avert a UDI – an early opportunity to express their support for the Labour Government’s policy.⁵¹ Finally, and most importantly, the statement left the Rhodesian Government in no doubt about the Labour Government’s attitude towards any illegal course of action that the Rhodesian Government might be contemplating. Ian Smith told the Rhodesian Legislative Assembly that his Government was not considering a UDI, and on 29 October 1964 the Assembly adopted the motion: ‘That the House takes note of the attitude of the British Government towards the independence issue and rejects any policy leading to a unilateral independence based on the result of the referendum of November the Fifth.’⁵² On the same day Smith admitted in a television broadcast that he had abandoned his hope of independence by Christmas because the British Government’s actions had ‘upset everything’, and assured the Rhodesian public that a UDI would not be undertaken without careful deliberation, which would take some time.⁵³ The Labour Government’s early handling of the Rhodesian Crisis was therefore extremely effective because it reduced the likelihood of a UDI and allowed more time in which to consider a solution of the problem. From this point onwards, however, the Labour Government’s approach became less robust.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Wood, *‘So far and no further!’*, pp. 245 and 247. For details of Old Commonwealth support see below, Ch. 4, pp. 223-24; and for U.S. support see Ch. 6, p. 312.

⁵² Wood, *‘So far and no further!’*, p. 247.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 248; and Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, p. 33.

On the day that the British Government issued its warning statement, the former Rhodesian Prime Minister, Sir Edgar Whitehead, told the Rhodesian Legislative Assembly that the British Government did not use words like ‘rebellion’ and ‘treason’ unless it reserved its right to use force.⁵⁴ Ironically, on 28 October 1964 an ad hoc Cabinet sub-committee – chaired by Wilson but attended by only four Cabinet ministers – agreed that:

[T]here could be no question of military intervention in Rhodesia unless [the British Government was] asked to intervene by the Governor and could rely on the co-operation of the Rhodesian regular forces and on the availability of Salisbury airfield as a point of entry.⁵⁵

These conditions were considered unlikely, which meant that the use of force against Rhodesia in the event of a UDI had really been ruled out within two weeks of the Labour Government taking office. The viability of military intervention is discussed at length in the next chapter, but for now it is important to note that Wilson and a handful of Cabinet ministers had imposed a significant constraint on the Government’s policy at a very early stage.

⁵⁴ *Rhodesian Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 59, Col. 436. Cited in Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, p. 33.

⁵⁵ TNA: PRO, CAB 130/206, Minutes of Meeting, 28 October 1964. This agreement reflected the advice in a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Defence, MISC 4/2, ‘UDI: Defence Implications’. The Ministers who attended the meeting were Lord Gardiner, Lord Chancellor; Denis Healey, Secretary of State for Defence; Arthur Bottomley, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations; and Anthony Greenwood, Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Anglo-Rhodesian negotiations during 1965

With military intervention ruled out, the Labour Government pursued a Rhodesian policy that was much the same as that of its Conservative predecessor.⁵⁶ In January 1965, Arthur Bottomley produced a paper for the DOPC outlining the Government's approach.⁵⁷ In the short term, the Government's aim was to prevent a UDI, the prospect of which would be damaging to British interests in Africa and the United Nations. A rebellion would have grave consequences for Britain's relations with the African Commonwealth, which would regard economic action against Rhodesia as insufficient and would therefore call for the use of force. As the British Government was not prepared to intervene militarily, it was 'liable to be widely held to be condoning a white Rhodesian rebellion.'⁵⁸ If, as seemed likely, an economic war broke out between Rhodesia and Zambia following a UDI, it would severely disrupt the production and export of Zambian copper, which would exacerbate Britain's economic difficulties.⁵⁹ The Government's long-term aim was to secure conditions under which independence could be granted on a basis acceptable to the Rhodesian population as a whole. If the Government appeared to retreat from this position, it ran 'the risk of alienating African

⁵⁶ On Conservative policy and attitudes see Philip Murphy, *Party Politics and Decolonization. The Conservative Party and British Colonial Policy in Tropical Africa 1951-1964* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). For the factors that contributed to the continuity in policy see below, Conclusion, pp. 390-92.

⁵⁷ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/19, OPD (65) 10, 'Southern Rhodesia: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations', 19 January 1965. For the Defence and Oversea Policy Committee discussions of this document see TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, OPD (65) 3rd Meeting, 21 January 1965.

⁵⁸ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/19, OPD (65) 10, 'Southern Rhodesia: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations', 19 January 1965, para. 4 (a).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

opinion in Rhodesia itself, the rest of the Commonwealth and the United Nations.’ If, on the other hand, the Government gave the white Rhodesians the impression that it was ‘determined to push ahead too far and too fast’, it would defeat the short-term objective of preventing a UDI. The Government’s problem was therefore: ‘to break through the political impasse without triggering off the explosion.’⁶⁰

Bottomley noted that Ian Smith had so far resisted the Government’s attempts to persuade him to come to London,⁶¹ but anticipated that in the event of Sir Winston Churchill’s death, Smith would visit for the funeral. This would provide an opportunity for private discussions and the Government could prevail upon other Commonwealth Prime Ministers, especially Sir Robert Menzies, to exercise their influence on Smith.⁶² Smith did indeed attend Churchill’s funeral, and on 30 January had a somewhat clandestine meeting with Wilson.⁶³ The British Prime Minister was well briefed for the meeting; his major objective was to prepare the ground for more substantive negotiations at a later

⁶⁰ Ibid., para. 4 (b).

⁶¹ For the exchanges between Wilson and Smith, November 1964 – January 1965, see Cmnd. 2807, pp. 45-56.

⁶² TNA: PRO, CAB 148/19, OPD (65) 10, ‘Southern Rhodesia: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations’, 19 January 1965, para. 5. For Smith’s discussions with Menzies (Australia), Holyoake (New Zealand), and Pearson (Canada), see below, Ch. 4, pp. 225-26.

⁶³ See Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, pp. 86-87, which gives the false impression that nothing substantive was discussed; and Wilson, *The Labour Government*, pp. 73-74, which gives only a general impression of their meeting. For the official, comprehensive version, see TNA: PRO, PREM 13/534, ff 86-95, ‘Record of a meeting between Mr Wilson and Mr Smith’, by Derek J. Mitchell, Prime Minister’s Principal Private Secretary, 30 January 1965, in S. R. Ashton and Wm. Roger Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Volume 5, Part II: Europe, Rhodesia, Commonwealth* (London: The Stationery Office, 2004), pp. 183-87.

date.⁶⁴ Smith was largely intransigent: he said that there could be no change in the Rhodesian Government's position and that it was looking at ways to prolong European control for '60 or 70 years, or perhaps even longer.'⁶⁵ Smith rejected Wilson's proposals for any concessions to the African population in Rhodesia, but he did agree that the Commonwealth Secretary and Lord Chancellor should visit Rhodesia and that they should be allowed to see anyone who was not in prison.⁶⁶ Wilson had not achieved much, but at least he had restored the momentum to talks about Rhodesia's independence, which is one of the key factors affecting the dynamic of negotiations.⁶⁷

The Cabinet Secretary, Sir Burke Trend, had already expressed reservations about the wisdom of a ministerial visit to Rhodesia. In a memorandum to the Prime Minister he questioned whether a visit would achieve much.⁶⁸ Trend suggested that the British Government was in a 'morally impregnable position' because it had stated that it would be prepared to grant independence on any basis that was acceptable to the Rhodesian people as a whole. Trend advised that if the British Government proposed amendments to the 1961 Constitution – and Smith refused to make them, or the African nationalists

⁶⁴ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/19, OPD (65) 22, 'Southern Rhodesia: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations', 27 January 1965. For the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee discussions of this document see TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, OPD (65) 6th Meeting, Item 2, 29 January 1965.

⁶⁵ TNA: PRO, PREM 13/534, ff 86-95, 'Record of a meeting between Mr Wilson and Mr Smith', by Derek J. Mitchell, Prime Minister's Principal Private Secretary, 30 January 1965, para. 1, in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, p. 184.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 185-87.

⁶⁷ R. P. Barston, *Modern Diplomacy* (London: Longman, 1988), pp. 85-86.

⁶⁸ TNA: PRO, PREM 13/534, 'Southern Rhodesia', Memorandum from Sir Burke Trend to Harold Wilson, 28 January 1965, in Murphy (ed.) *BDEEP Series B, Vol. 9, Part II*, p. 508.

rejected them as inadequate – this would expose the British Government to attack, ‘because we have indicated that we regard it as our duty (rather than Mr Smith’s) to take the initiative in attempting to solve the problem and are therefore blameable to the extent to which we fail to solve it.’⁶⁹ However, the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO) did not have in mind that the aim of the ministerial visit should be to produce a solution to the problem, but rather: ‘to re-establish a dialogue with the [Rhodesian] Government; to correct false ideas of British policies; to combat the move to a unilateral declaration of independence; and to assess public opinion.’⁷⁰ It was in pursuit of these limited objectives that Arthur Bottomley and Lord Gardiner visited Rhodesia between 21 February and 3 March 1965. They had meetings with a wide cross-section of Rhodesian opinion, including: Ian Smith and Rhodesian ministers; the Opposition; the Chiefs and Headsmen; African nationalists; representatives of business, farming, and industrial interests; and educational, cultural, and religious leaders.⁷¹ From the outset some elements of the British press were sceptical that the visit would achieve anything.⁷² Towards the end of the visit, one report in *The Times* suggested that the ministerial tour had proved the intractability of the various factions in Rhodesia and commented that it had been a ‘justification exercise’: the Rhodesian Government could point to their invitation as evidence of good faith in an attempt to negotiate their independence, and the

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181877, ‘Rhodesia: Visit by the Secretary of State and the Lord Chancellor’, J. B. Johnston, British High Commissioner, Salisbury, to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, Despatch No. 3 (Secret), 12 March 1965; CRO Print, 6 April 1965, p. 1.

⁷¹ See Arthur Bottomley, *Commonwealth, Comrades and Friends* (Bombay: Somaiya Publications, 1985), pp. 143-48; Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, pp. 87-88; Wood, ‘So far and no further!’, pp. 276-85; and Young, *Rhodesia and Independence*, pp. 187-91.

⁷² See editorial, *The Times*, 22 February 1965; and editorial, *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 February 1965.

British could report to the forthcoming Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference that the UK was doing all it could to find a solution.⁷³ One of Wilson's biographers has followed this line, suggesting that 'The ministerial visit proved fruitless.'⁷⁴

It may certainly be argued that the visit was unsuccessful if it is assessed merely on the basis that it produced no tangible agreement between the British and Rhodesian Governments. On the other hand, the British High Commissioner in Rhodesia, J. B. (Jack) Johnston, reported that although the 'realistic picture remains one of irreconcilable positions and immovable views', the visit had achieved its intended objectives 'in great measure'.⁷⁵ First, the Rhodesian Government had been left in no doubt of the severe consequences of a UDI, which had 'produced an increased disposition to look at any other way out of the impasse'.⁷⁶ Second, a dialogue had been re-established, albeit within narrow limits.⁷⁷ Third, and most notably, 'the sedulously fostered myths and misconceptions about the British Government's policy and purpose' had been dispelled effectively, which had produced a 'tangible lessening of the previous tension.'⁷⁸ Finally, 'a balanced assessment of the state of Rhodesian opinion, and of the possibilities of

⁷³ 'Mr Bottomley Hears Tough Talk From Farmers', *The Times*, 1 March 1965.

⁷⁴ Ben Pimlott, *Harold Wilson* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 368.

⁷⁵ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181877, 'Rhodesia: Visit by the Secretary of State and the Lord Chancellor', p. 1.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 25.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 26.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 27. This was confirmed by other sources. According to the editor of the *Guardian*, Sir Roy Welensky shared the CRO view that the visit had been a success because they had made it clear that the British Government did not intend to impose a settlement. BLPES: Papers of Alastair Hetherington [hereafter Hetherington Papers], Hetherington/9/12, 'Note of a meeting with Sir Roy Welensky', Salisbury, 17 March 1965. The RAF Liaison Officer in Salisbury reported that the visit had done much 'to calm things down'. TNA: PRO, AIR 20/11189, Group Captain Johns to MOD (Air Department), 1 April 1965.

compromise, was amply achieved.’⁷⁹ At the conclusion of their visit Bottomley and Gardiner told the press that their main impression was ‘of a hardening of attitudes in recent months amongst both Europeans and Africans’, but they remained conscious of the hopes of all Rhodesians that ‘some way forward can be found which will reassure both those Africans who at present feel themselves denied full political and human rights and those Europeans who fear losing what they have earned and won.’⁸⁰

Did Bottomley and Gardiner really feel that there was a way forward, or was their public statement merely part of the ‘justification exercise’ perceived by *The Times*?⁸¹ British Cabinet sub-committee minutes suggest that during an informal meeting with Smith on 3 March, Bottomley and Gardiner had discussed the possibility of granting independence in return for a combination of changes in the Rhodesian franchise and alteration of legislative provisions governing land distribution. The specific proposals were that: election to the ‘B’ Roll would be on the basis of ‘one man, one vote’; the number of ‘B’ Roll seats would be increased from 15 to 26, providing a blocking minority of one-third plus one, to guarantee against retrogressive changes in the Constitution; the process by which Africans qualified for the ‘A’ Roll would be speeded up, to hold out the prospect

⁷⁹ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181877, ‘Rhodesia: Visit by the Secretary of State and the Lord Chancellor’, para. 28.

⁸⁰ Ibid., Annex B, ‘Final Statement Read to the Press, Radio, and Television Representatives’, 3 March 1965, paras. 4 and 13. Bottomley expressed a similar view to the House of Commons on 8 March 1965. Wood, *‘So far and no further!’*, pp. 285-86. Smith later wrote that ‘Bottomley’s report to the House of Commons was more reasonable and conciliatory than we expected.’ *Bitter Harvest*, p. 88.

⁸¹ ‘Mr Bottomley Hears Tough Talk From Farmers’, *The Times*, 1 March 1965.

of majority rule in a measurable time; and the Land Apportionment Act would be liberalised.⁸² British ministers took note that:

There could be no certainty that Mr Smith would accept an agreement on these lines, or that, even if he himself did so, he could carry his Government and the white population of Southern Rhodesia with him. The danger of embarking on negotiations with Mr Smith was that, if they were to become public, they would be denounced by the other African Governments, including the Commonwealth in Africa, as a betrayal of the Africans in Southern Rhodesia. If the opposition were such that the United Kingdom Government then had to draw back Mr Smith would be almost certain to make a UDI and would probably publish any correspondence with the United Kingdom Government.⁸³

Bottomley and Gardiner were convinced that Smith genuinely wanted to reach an agreement and that his dominant position in Rhodesian politics held out the prospect that

⁸² TNA: PRO, CAB 21/5513, MISC51/1, Minutes of Meeting, 25 March 1965, in Murphy (ed.), *BDEEP Series B, Vol. 9, Part II*, p. 523. It has been suggested that Smith reported to his Cabinet that in the private meeting he did not offer anything more than 'one man, one vote' on the 'B' Roll. SP/3/001, SRC (S) (65), 18th Meeting, 9 March 1965. Cited in Wood, *'So far and no further!'*, p. 284. Anthony Verrier has commented that the Rhodesian franchise was 'so complex as to be intelligible only to a constitutional pedant.' *From Zimbabwe to Rhodesia* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1986) p. 131. The franchise is outlined in the Appendix to this thesis, pp. 402-03.

⁸³ TNA: PRO, CAB 21/5513, MISC 51/1, Minutes of Meeting, 25 March 1965, in Murphy (ed.), *BDEEP Series B, Vol. 9, Part II*, p. 524.

he might be able to secure it.⁸⁴ Over the next few weeks the British High Commissioner, Jack Johnston, discussed privately with Smith the formula that the British Government hoped might provide a way forward for a formal agreement.⁸⁵ However, these discussions took place against a background of increasing tension, because on 30 March the Governor suddenly and unexpectedly announced that a general election would take place in Rhodesia on 7 May.⁸⁶ In his memoirs Smith explained that the election served two purposes: first, it was a means by which to demonstrate to the British Government that there was no possibility of replacing the Rhodesian Front ‘with more malleable left-wingers’; and second, it was an opportunity to obtain a two-thirds majority so that the Rhodesian Government could pass constitutional amendments in the Legislative Assembly.⁸⁷

Against this background Johnston reported that he was unable to secure any private commitments from Smith, especially regarding the proposal for a blocking third in the

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Wood, *‘So far and no further!’*, pp. 293-96.

⁸⁶ The last election had been held in 1962, so an election was not due in 1965. The Governor asked the Chief Justice, Hugh Beadle, whether the request could be refused. Beadle advised that if there was no alternative government and Smith had the full backing of his caucus, the dissolution could not be refused. They sent for Smith and David Butler, the leader of the Rhodesia Party (formerly the United Federal Party), but Butler declined to try and form a government. Megahey, *Humphrey Gibbs*, p. 95; Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, p. 89; and Wood, *‘So far and no further!’*, p. 291. Robert Blake has suggested that it was a mistake not to see Butler alone. If he had agreed to form a government it would most likely have been defeated in the Legislative Assembly, but this would have resulted in a general election at which the Rhodesia Party could have fought a campaign on the basis of opposition to a UDI. *A History of Rhodesia* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1977), p. 372.

⁸⁷ Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, p. 89.

Legislative Assembly, and he was unlikely to be able to pin Smith down during the election campaign because he was wary of his position in his own Cabinet and with the electorate. Johnston suspected that Smith was attempting to manoeuvre the British Government into a public statement of its proposals for independence. This, Johnston recognised, could provoke adverse African reactions and he therefore suggested that the British Government might consider a statement of principles rather than specific terms.⁸⁸

It was at this juncture that the CRO formulated the Five Principles:⁸⁹

- (i) The principle and intention of unimpeded progress to majority rule, already enshrined in the 1961 Constitution, would have to be maintained and guaranteed.
- (ii) There would have to be guarantees against retrogressive amendment of the Constitution.
- (iii) There would have to be immediate improvement in the political status of the African population.

⁸⁸ TNA: PRO, PREM 13/535 f. 100, No. 452, Johnston to Bottomley, 15 April 1965. Cited in Wood, *'So far and no further!'*, p. 298.

⁸⁹ Some earlier accounts suggested that Duncan Sandys and Sir Alec Douglas-Home crafted the Five Principles as a basis for discussion with Ian Smith during the Rhodesian Prime Minister's visit to London in September 1964. J. D. B. Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of Expansion and Attrition 1953-1969* (London: Oxford University Press for The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1974), p. 202, n. 2; Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, p. 40. Bottomley and Wilson both suggested in their memoirs that it was during the Bottomley-Gardiner visit to Rhodesia in February 1965 that the Five Principles were first formally stated. Bottomley, *Commonwealth, Comrades and Friends*, p. 145; and Wilson, *The Labour Government*, p. 143. There is, however, no mention of the Five Principles in the official report of the visit, TNA: PRO, FO 371/181877, 'Rhodesia: Visit by the Secretary of State and the Lord Chancellor'.

- (iv) There would have to be progress towards ending racial discrimination.
- (v) The British Government would need to be satisfied that any basis proposed for independence was acceptable to the people of Rhodesia as a whole.⁹⁰

In theoretical terms it may be argued that these principles were helpful because they provided a means to facilitate the incremental process by which polarised parties narrow their differences in negotiations.⁹¹ On the other hand, Martin Le Quesne, reflecting on the end of his four-year term as Head of the Foreign Office West and Central Africa Department in 1968, suggested that in practice these principles had operated as more of a constraint. Le Quesne acknowledged that the articulation of the principles had been necessary to clarify British thinking, but thought that making them public was a mistake because it diverted Anglo-Rhodesian negotiations into a ‘sterile channel’, in which a political settlement could only be achieved if it conformed in every respect with the principles.⁹² In a recent study John Young concurred with Le Quesne’s contemporary assessment, arguing that the principles ‘tied Britain’s hands in future talks and in a sense made agreement less likely, because they went beyond what the Rhodesia Front would accept.’⁹³ In another recent analysis, which is sympathetic to the Rhodesian Front, Richard Wood has gone so far as to suggest that the principles not only impeded any

⁹⁰ In January 1966 Wilson added a sixth principle: that regardless of race, there should be no oppression of the majority by the minority or of the minority by the majority. Good, *UDI*, p. 123; Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, p. 78; Young, *Rhodesia and Independence*, pp. 228 and 378.

⁹¹ Barston, *Modern Diplomacy*, p. 82.

⁹² TNA: PRO, FCO 25/27, ‘Sub-Saharan Africa: retrospect and prospects’, Memorandum by C. M. Le Quesne, 27 June 1968, para. 10, in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, pp. 390-91.

⁹³ John Young, *The Labour Governments 1964-70 Volume 2: International Policy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 171.

solution short of majority rule but also resulted in ‘the return of Robert Mugabe in 1980 and all the consequences which flowed.’⁹⁴ This is excessively reductionist, but it does demonstrate that there has been consistent criticism of the Five Principles since they were first formulated up to the present day.

The British Government was anxious to avoid a situation in which Smith could turn the Rhodesian general election into a referendum on the principles, and Johnston therefore did not reveal them to Smith until 27 May.⁹⁵ Smith apparently ‘gave no immediate reaction either favourable or unfavourable’ to the British High Commissioner.⁹⁶ In the meantime, two related developments appeared to suggest that the Rhodesian Government might be moving nearer to a UDI. First, on 26 April, the Rhodesian Government published a White Paper entitled ‘Economic Aspects of a Declaration of Independence’, which suggested that the economic consequences of a UDI would not be as serious as the British Government had warned in its statement of October 1964. In particular, it claimed that Rhodesia’s exports of tobacco could be marketed in countries other than Britain (which was Rhodesia’s biggest customer), and that Rhodesia would be able to secure investment from friendly countries. The White Paper alarmed some Europeans in Rhodesia. *The Rhodesia Herald* dismissed it as ‘an insult to the electorate’, and the

⁹⁴ Wood, ‘*So far and no further!*’, p. 298.

⁹⁵ TNA: PRO, CAB 130/226, Minutes of Cabinet Sub-Committee Meeting, 26 April 1965; and ‘The Rhodesian Issue: Future Tactics’, Memorandum by Cledwyn Hughes, Minister of State, CRO, 23 April 1965; also Wood, ‘*So far and no further!*’, pp. 298-316.

⁹⁶ Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga, Wellington Office [hereafter ANZ]: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 12, M. J. C. Templeton, Counsellor, New Zealand High Commission, London, to Secretary of External Affairs, Wellington, 2 June 1965; and National Archives of Canada, Ottawa [hereafter NAC]: MG 31-E47, Vol. 66, ‘Rhodesia’, Confidential Memorandum, 7 June 1965, p. 4

Institute of Directors published their own assessment, prepared the previous November, that a UDI would have ‘disastrous financial and economic consequences.’⁹⁷ In a statement to the House of Commons on 29 April, Harold Wilson explained that although his Government did not seek to influence the Rhodesian electorate, he must reiterate his previous warning that a UDI would have a disastrous effect upon the Rhodesian economy and would damage its relations with the Commonwealth.⁹⁸ Thereafter, criticism of the White Paper by Rhodesian commercial and industrial interests became even more vocal, though this apparently had little effect on the Rhodesian Government. Even the Leader of the Opposition, David Butler, said: ‘It is wrong for Britain to go on threatening Rhodesia without putting forward an alternative for settling our future.’⁹⁹

The second development that pointed towards a possible UDI was the Rhodesian Front’s overwhelming electoral victory. It won all fifty of the ‘A’ Roll seats, and in the 28 contested constituencies the Rhodesian Front polled 28,165 votes to the Rhodesia Party’s 6,377. The Opposition consisted of ten Africans of the new, United Peoples’ Party elected on the ‘B’ Roll, four African independents and one white (Dr Ahrn Palley). The election totally destroyed the Rhodesia Party and thereby eradicated the remaining political influence of the old liberal establishment in Rhodesia.¹⁰⁰ Alan Megahey has observed that the election also contributed to the isolation of another moderating

⁹⁷ Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, pp. 35-36; Wood, ‘*So far and no further!*’, p. 302; Young, *Rhodesia and Independence*, pp. 196-99.

⁹⁸ Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, p. 36; Wood, ‘*So far and no further!*’, p. 304; Young, *Rhodesia and Independence*, p. 200.

⁹⁹ Wood, ‘*So far and no further!*’, p. 307; Young, *Rhodesia and Independence*, p. 200.

¹⁰⁰ Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, p. 37; Wood, ‘*So far and no further!*’, p. 311; Young, *Rhodesia and Independence*, p. 203.

influence, the Governor, Humphrey Gibbs: ‘In a sense, on the political scene, the Governor was on his own, whereas in the past, friends, colleagues and old acquaintances – the establishment – had been part of the political and social milieu in which he moved.’¹⁰¹ The outcome of the election obviously had significant constitutional and political implications, but it did not unduly alarm the British Government, for three reasons. First, the DOPC had already anticipated that in the event of a general election the Rhodesian Front would win a two-thirds majority in the Legislative Assembly, so the result did not come as an unexpected shock.¹⁰² Second, the Rhodesian Government immediately and publicly denied that it regarded the election as a mandate for a UDI.¹⁰³ Third, shortly after the election the British High Commissioner advised the DOPC that Smith was ‘now much more relaxed’, and that he ‘genuinely wanted to negotiate and to avoid a UDI if possible.’¹⁰⁴ Smith had told Johnston that ‘the extremists in the Rhodesian Front did not represent the views of the majority in the party or his own views.’ Smith had committed himself publicly to exhausting all possibilities of negotiation before he made a UDI and he had told Johnston that if talks did break down, ‘then he would have to make a clear assessment of where Rhodesia’s interests lay before taking any action’. The DOPC therefore interpreted this as a disposition to postpone the issue, and concluded: ‘Though the gap to be bridged in negotiation with Mr Smith was wide, and the scope for compromise limited, there seemed now less cause for anxiety in the immediate future.’¹⁰⁵ One month later, Arthur Bottomley was still optimistic that a

¹⁰¹ Megahey, *Humphrey Gibbs*, p. 96.

¹⁰² TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, Minutes of OPD (65) 15th Meeting, 5 March 1965, p. 4.

¹⁰³ Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, p. 90; Wood, ‘*So far and no further!*’, p. 311; Young, *Rhodesia and Independence*, p. 204.

¹⁰⁴ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, Minutes of OPD (65) 26th Meeting, 19 May 1965, p. 4.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

UDI might be avoided, and advised the DOPC that Smith seemed to be pursuing a more moderate policy.¹⁰⁶

Harold Wilson's main concern in June 1965 was to make it through the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting without either precipitating the disintegration of the Commonwealth over the Rhodesian problem, or destroying the chances of a negotiated settlement by entering into untenable commitments forced upon him by African Commonwealth leaders. He was remarkably successful in both respects.¹⁰⁷ He then wrote immediately to Smith: 'I am sure you will understand that throughout the meeting I have been seeking to keep the way open to pursue the negotiations with you. It remains our policy and indeed our earnest wish to bring them to a successful conclusion within the broad framework which our High Commissioner has explained to you.'¹⁰⁸ The 'broad framework' to which Wilson referred was the set of principles that Smith accepted at the end of May. Even though the British Government had no further specific proposals to put forward, ministers recognised that they should be *seen* to be negotiating, and to this end it was suggested that Cledwyn Hughes, Minister of State at the CRO, should visit Rhodesia.¹⁰⁹ Bottomley advised Smith that he was sending Hughes on his behalf because of his own parliamentary commitments and his forthcoming visit to West Africa, which was a long-standing engagement.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, Minutes of OPD (65) 29th Meeting, 16 June 1965, p. 4

¹⁰⁷ For further details see below, Ch. 5, pp. 284 ff.

¹⁰⁸ Wilson to Smith, 25 June 1965, Cmnd. 2807, p. 61. Smith replied: 'As I see it, the position has changed little and it is now our task to continue with negotiations to the best of our endeavours.' Smith to Wilson, 28 June 1965, Cmnd. 2807, p. 62.

¹⁰⁹ TNA: PRO, CAB 130/228, Minutes of Cabinet Sub-Committee, 12 July 1965.

¹¹⁰ Bottomley to Smith, 18 July 1965, Cmnd. 2807, p. 62.

In his account of the negotiations historian Kenneth Young suggested that at this juncture Smith was optimistic about the prospects for a settlement, because: ‘He believed – wrongly – that through his talks with the High Commissioner he had somehow converted the British Government to his point of view and that this was proved by their willingness to send out the Minister of State to talk to him.’¹¹¹ However, Smith soon recognised that Hughes, ‘did not have the power to make decisions, and was simply putting out feelers in the hope that he could take something back with him.’¹¹² The main objectives of the visit were to see how far Smith was prepared to go along the lines suggested by Bottomley in March, and to determine whether a negotiated settlement was possible on the basis of the Five Principles. To this end Hughes was instructed to discuss with Smith the idea of a senate, which might accommodate three of the principles. By giving the Africans a more effective political voice it would satisfy the second principle of immediate political improvement for Africans. By giving it a power of veto over changes to the Constitution it would satisfy the second principle of no retrogressive constitutional amendments. By taking over the role of the Constitutional Council it would meet the requirements of the fourth principle, to eliminate racial discrimination.¹¹³ Although Smith was prepared to consider a senate that represented African opinion, he was unwilling to allow an African majority, rejected the safeguard of a veto over constitutional changes, and was reluctant to concede to the senate more than a nominal legislative role. Hughes also found that Smith would not accept a blocking third in the Legislative Assembly, but might consider the possibility of a blocking quarter on some constitutional matters. Smith suggested that an extension of the franchise on the ‘B’ Roll would be possible, but the number of ‘B’

¹¹¹ Young, *Rhodesia and Independence*, p. 209.

¹¹² Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, p. 90.

¹¹³ TNA: PRO, PREM 13/538, ff. 159 and 161. Cited in Wood, ‘*So far and no further!*’, p. 331.

Roll seats would only be increased in proportion with an increase in 'A' Roll seats (which would nullify the increase in African representation). Smith also agreed to look at possible changes to the Land Apportionment Act as a means to reduce racial discrimination.¹¹⁴ On his return to London, Hughes advised the British Government that there was no immediate danger of a UDI, and confirmed earlier impressions that Smith was anxious to negotiate a settlement. Ministers concluded: 'The situation as a whole was fluid.'¹¹⁵ The British Government had, once again, detected no obvious way through the *impasse* but had at least sustained the dialogue and held the door open for further negotiations, which may be considered an achievement in itself.

However, there were signs that the Rhodesian Government was becoming increasingly impatient with the lack of substantive progress in negotiations. At the conclusion of Hughes' visit the Rhodesian Government announced that the former Minister of Information and Tourism, Harry Reedman, would be appointed as Rhodesia's 'accredited diplomatic representative' in Lisbon. Rhodesia already had a diplomatic representative in South Africa, so it was obvious that Rhodesia was strengthening its links with the countries from which it expected support in the event of a UDI. The British Government publicly played down the issue, suggesting that Reedman would not have the status of 'accredited diplomatic representative', but rather would be attached to the British Embassy in Lisbon in the same manner that Rhodesian representatives served in other British embassies.¹¹⁶ Privately, however, the British Government treated the matter with

¹¹⁴ TNA: PRO, CAB 130/228, Minutes of Cabinet Sub-Committee, 30 July 1965; and Wood, '*So far and no further!*', Ch. 20, 'A Further Attempt to Delay. The Visit of Cledwyn Hughes, July-August 1965', *passim*.

¹¹⁵ TNA: PRO, CAB 130/228, Minutes of Cabinet Sub-Committee, 30 July 1965.

¹¹⁶ Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, p. 41; Wood, '*So far and no further!*', p. 339; and Young, *Rhodesia and Independence*, p. 212.

grave concern, and it generated considerable friction with the Rhodesian Government.¹¹⁷ It was in this context that a rapid exchange of correspondence took place between Smith and Bottomley. The Commonwealth Secretary proposed to visit Salisbury after the Labour Party Conference and before Parliament resumed on 26 October.¹¹⁸ Smith was clearly frustrated by the delay and advised Bottomley: ‘the impression is gaining ground that your Government has no intention of granting independence to Rhodesia.’ Smith stressed that his Government regarded the matter of Rhodesia’s independence as ‘one of extreme urgency’ and requested a ‘definite reply’ to the proposals that had been put forward during Hughes’ visit.¹¹⁹ Bottomley replied that there had been no concrete proposals, expressed his concern over the ‘apparent hardening’ of Smith’s views, and emphasised the importance of further negotiations.¹²⁰ Smith pointed out that the ‘the concept of a senate was raised and quite definite views were put forward’, and rejected as unsatisfactory the British Government’s unwillingness to discuss further proposals until Bottomley arrived in Salisbury for further discussions, which, Smith warned: ‘must reach final decisions’. With regard to Bottomley’s observations Smith advised: ‘The hardening of our views here in Rhodesia is not merely apparent; it is very real and serious. So long as the delay in reaching a decision persists the gap between our respective Governments will continue to widen.’ Smith observed that the Rhodesian planting season was about to begin and commented: ‘our farmers expect and are entitled to a decision on our

¹¹⁷ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, Minutes of OPD (65) 38th Meeting, 13 September 1965, pp. 3-4; and Wood, ‘*So far and no further!*’, Ch. 21, ‘The Straw in the Wind. Rhodesia’s First Act of Defiance: The Lisbon Appointment, August-September 1965’, *passim*.

¹¹⁸ Bottomley to Smith, 7 September 1965, Cmnd. 2807, p. 63.

¹¹⁹ Smith to Bottomley, 11 September 1965, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 63-64.

¹²⁰ Bottomley to Smith, 13 September 1965, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 64-65.

independence.’ He therefore urged Bottomley to advance the date of his visit.¹²¹ Bottomley could not accede to Smith’s request, but in an attempt to maintain the momentum of negotiations he reverted to discussion of the Five Principles, on which the British Government would have to be satisfied before it could grant independence.¹²² At this point Smith’s patience was exhausted and he proposed to visit London for talks in early October.¹²³

The British Government anticipated that talks with Smith would fall into two phases: first, reasoned argument; second, warning and intimidation. Sir Burke Trend noted that the success of the second phase would depend upon the Government’s ‘determination to introduce, if there is a u.d.i., the various economic measures which Ministers have considered many times but have not yet formally approved.’¹²⁴ Trend recognised one of the fundamental weaknesses associated with the British Government’s position – that it had failed to establish exactly what it intended to do in the event of a UDI – which is discussed in greater detail below. Before the talks began, Bottomley told the DOPC that the discussions were not expected to produce any results and the most that could be hoped for was to reiterate the consequences of a UDI. Wilson noted that Smith had retreated from his earlier readiness to negotiate on the basis of the Five Principles, perhaps because of pressure in his own party. Jack Johnston explained that Smith’s earlier willingness to negotiate was based on the assumption that the British Government was seeking only minor concessions, which would not affect the dominant position of the Europeans in

¹²¹ Smith to Bottomley, 15 September 1965, Cmnd. 2807, p. 65.

¹²² Bottomley to Smith, 21 September 1965, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 66-68.

¹²³ Smith to Bottomley, 27 September 1965, Cmnd. 2807, p. 68.

¹²⁴ TNA: PRO, PREM 13/539, Trend to Wilson, 1 October 1965, in Murphy (ed.) *BDEEP Series B, Vol. 9, Part II*, p. 537.

Rhodesia, but it was now clear to Smith that the British Government would only grant independence on the basis of the Five Principles, which were unacceptable to him and his party.¹²⁵

According to Bottomley, when the talks began on 5 October, Smith accepted that the discussions should be based on the Five Principles but subsequently rejected all of them, so no progress was made:

His only positive proposal had been the suggestion of a Second Chamber to consist of six Chiefs, one Asian representative, one African representative and four representatives of industry, commerce, the professions, etc., all nominated by the Southern Rhodesian Government. A two-thirds majority of both Houses voting together would be required for the amendment of the specially entrenched clauses of the Constitution.¹²⁶

Smith would not agree to repeal the Land Apportionment Act as a means to diminish racial discrimination. He argued that the 1961 Constitution had been negotiated with the intention that Rhodesia should subsequently obtain independence on this basis, and sought to press the British Government for a statement that it rejected the Constitution. Smith also argued that the fifth principle – that a settlement must be acceptable to the people of Rhodesia as a whole – superseded the first four principles. Bottomley

¹²⁵ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, Minutes of OPD (65) 42nd Meeting, 2 October 1965, pp. 3-5.

¹²⁶ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, Minutes of OPD (65) 43rd Meeting, 7 October 1965, p. 3; also in Murphy (ed.) *BDEEP Series B, Vol. 9, Part II*, p. 548.

concluded: ‘It appeared that there was unanimity between Smith and his colleagues and that the talks were heading for a breakdown.’¹²⁷ It was at this critical juncture that Wilson took over the negotiations. It was made clear that the British Government was prepared to grant independence before African majority rule, but despite this major concession and extensive discussions, no agreement was reached on the implementation of independence on the basis of the Five Principles.¹²⁸ The joint communiqué stated that frank and thorough discussions had failed to reconcile the two Governments’ opposing views and no further meeting was planned.¹²⁹ Smith later wrote that ‘this was a blunder, because it established the fact that there was only one way out for us.’¹³⁰ Smith and Wilson had discussions independently with the Conservative Party leadership over the course of the weekend. Edward Heath and Selwyn Lloyd suggested that an alternative way to provide constitutional safeguards for the Africans might be to sign a treaty, perhaps registered with the United Nations, guaranteeing that there would be no regression in the constitutional status of Africans after independence.¹³¹ Before Smith departed London he had one further meeting to discuss this idea with Wilson.¹³² The British Prime Minister observed that the only precedent for such a treaty of guarantee was Cyprus, and it was ‘not entirely a happy one’, but conceded that the idea might merit

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Records of Meetings held at 10 Downing Street on 7 and 8 October 1965, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 69-90; Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, pp. 91-92; Wilson, *The Labour Government*, pp. 146-49; Wood, ‘*So far and no further!*’, Ch. 23, ‘Fruitless Negotiations with Wilson in London, October 1965’, *passim*; and Young, *Rhodesia and Independence*, Ch. 12, ‘Irreconcilable: 1-12 October 1965’, *passim*.

¹²⁹ Agreed Communiqué, 8 October 1965, Cmnd. 2807, p. 90.

¹³⁰ Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, p. 93.

¹³¹ Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, p. 93; Wilson, *The Labour Government*, p. 149.

¹³² Record of a Meeting held at 10 Downing Street, 11 October 1965, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 90-95.

further discussion.¹³³ Smith pointed out that it would still offer a possible way forward on only one of the Five Principles; the difficulties in respect of the other four would remain. Wilson accepted this, but suggested that it still offered the possibility that some progress might be made.¹³⁴ Wilson had, once again, tried to leave the door open to further negotiations even though it was obvious to both sides that there was little, if any, room for agreement.

After Smith departed London, Wilson appeared on television. As Smith later observed: ‘Very adroitly, he changed course from the irreconcilability expressed in the communiqué of [the previous] Friday.’¹³⁵ Wilson explained that he had followed the principles of successive British Governments, and was not giving up because too much was at stake. He revealed a new initiative, for a Commonwealth mission, and concluded with a dramatic appeal: ‘I know I speak for everyone in these islands, all parties, all people, when I say to Mr Smith: “Prime Minister, think again”.’¹³⁶ Wilson then wrote to Smith: ‘it is important that everything that is humanly possible should be done to devise a peaceful solution of the Rhodesian problem.’ He urged Smith to accept a Commonwealth mission of senior statesmen, headed by Sir Robert Menzies of Australia, which was ‘genuinely meant as an attempt to open up new avenues of negotiation.’¹³⁷ Smith replied that Menzies had a standing invitation to visit Rhodesia, but the Rhodesian Government

¹³³ Ibid., p. 93.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, p. 94.

¹³⁶ Wilson, *The Labour Government*, pp. 149-50.

¹³⁷ Wilson to Smith, 12 October 1965, Cmnd. 2807, p. 95. For further details of the proposed Commonwealth mission see below, Ch. 4, pp. 219-20.

was not disposed to accept the proposed Commonwealth mission.¹³⁸ Smith was aware that ‘Wilson was manoeuvring for tactical advantage, and trying to ensure that he did not place himself in a position where he appeared to be responsible for any breakdown of negotiations.’¹³⁹ They continued to exchange correspondence and Wilson put forward a proposal to visit Salisbury, which Smith accepted.¹⁴⁰ Smith could not really have done otherwise, for he was obviously as conscious as Wilson of the need to avoid the public impression that he was responsible for the final breakdown of talks between the British and Rhodesian Governments. From this perspective it may be argued that Wilson’s move was astute because it locked his opponent into a further round of negotiations, with the prospect of indefinite delay. This clearly suited the British Government, but not the Rhodesian Government, which was convinced that it must resolve the uncertainty surrounding Rhodesia’s future. On the other hand, according to Richard Crossman there were serious reservations in the British Cabinet about the wisdom of Wilson’s tactical manoeuvre. Crossman thought that ‘Burke Trend was the decisive influence’, and compared the initiative to Neville Chamberlain’s flight to Munich.¹⁴¹ Arthur Bottomley later wrote that it was ‘most unwise’, because: ‘Nothing would be gained by such a visit and our Asian, West Indian and African Commonwealth partners would not be enthusiastic about the proposal.’¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Smith to Wilson, 18 October 1965, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 96-97.

¹³⁹ Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, pp. 94-95.

¹⁴⁰ Wilson to Smith, 18 October 1965; Smith to Wilson, 20 October 1965; Wilson to Smith, 21 October 1965; and Smith to Wilson, 21 October 1965, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 96-102.

¹⁴¹ R. H. S. Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister. Volume 1, Minister of Housing, 1964-66* (London: Hamish Hamilton and Jonathan Cape, 1975), p. 356, entry for Thursday 21 October 1965.

¹⁴² Bottomley, *Commonwealth, Comrades and Friends*, p. 149.

Oliver Wright, Wilson's Foreign Office Private Secretary, defined the objective of the visit as an attempt to discover, 'by personal contact and discussion with all shades of Rhodesian opinion whether there exists a general desire to find a way out of the present deadlock', and 'if there is such a desire, to try to crystallize and focus it; and to float a proposition.'¹⁴³ The particular target of the visit was to obtain a year's moratorium on the independence issue. Wright envisaged that this could be achieved if: (i) the Rhodesian Government withdrew of the threat of UDI; (ii) the British Government withdrew the threat of sanctions; (iii) the African nationalists agreed to set aside their differences, work the Constitution, and adopt legal political methods; (iv) the Rhodesian Government lifted the restrictions on African nationalists in return for their assurance of legal methods; (v) all parties agreed to take stock at the end of one year, perhaps at a constitutional conference in London; and (vi) the British Government sweetened the package through a combination of education and training for Africans, government-to-government loans, and encouragement of private capital investment directed towards Europeans.¹⁴⁴ Tactically, the British would try to hold Smith in the centre through discussions, whilst 'outflanking him to left and right by taking soundings of moderate opinion among Nationalist leaders, ex-Prime Ministers, business and farming interests etc. to discover whether there is scope for a fresh approach to Rhodesian independence.'¹⁴⁵ All of this was sound in theory, but what the British Government did not know is that from the very beginning there was no likelihood that Wilson's visit would succeed, because on 19

¹⁴³ TNA: PRO, PREM 13/542. ff 91-93, 'Visit to Rhodesia: October 1965', Minute by J. O. Wright, 22 October 1965, in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, p. 205.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

October the Rhodesian Security Council had taken the decision to proceed with UDI 'at the first favourable opportunity.'¹⁴⁶

At the commencement of negotiations between the two Governments on 26 October, Smith observed that although the position was generally unchanged, there was a 'ray of light'. He understood that there were signs of a more reasonable attitude on the part of the African nationalists and the Opposition, who realised that a settlement short of majority rule might be preferable to 'something worse than the 1961 Constitution' (by which he meant a UDI). No progress was made on the suggestion of a post-independence treaty of guarantee because the two sides could not agree exactly what constitutional safeguards the treaty would offer, and the Rhodesian Government would not concede sufficient ground on the issue of African political advancement to make it possible for the British Government to agree to independence before majority rule.¹⁴⁷ Wilson then had meetings with the African nationalists, which Elaine Windrich has observed: 'were an essential preparation for negotiations with the Europeans. If he could be seen to be taking a tough line with them, his chances of getting an agreement with the Europeans would be immeasurably improved.'¹⁴⁸ However, Wilson found that despite Smith's optimistic remarks earlier in the day, the African nationalists remained obdurate: they would not

¹⁴⁶ Ken Flower, *Serving Secretly. An Intelligence Chief on Record: Rhodesia into Zimbabwe, 1964-1981* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987), pp. 47-48. Flower was the Chief of the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation.

¹⁴⁷ 'Record of a meeting held at Milton Buildings, Salisbury', 26 October 1965, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 102-11. See also: Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, p. 96; Wilson, *The Labour Government*, pp. 155-57; Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, pp. 50-51; Wood, 'So far and no further!', pp. 412-14; and Young, *Rhodesia and Independence*, pp. 256-58.

¹⁴⁸ Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, p. 49.

agree to co-operate with each other, to withdraw their demands for immediate majority rule, or to work legally under the 1961 Constitution.¹⁴⁹ The need to engineer a more reasonable attitude on the part of Joshua Nkomo and Ndabaningi Sithole may well explain Wilson's otherwise incomprehensible decision to rule out explicitly the use of force against Rhodesia in the event of a UDI.¹⁵⁰ However, even this did not assist his dealings with the Rhodesian Government, which were soured by mutual contempt. One of Wilson's biographers commented: 'the ultra-reactionary Rhodesian Cabinet regarded the British premier with macho scorn, while he treated them with headmasterly distaste.'¹⁵¹

At their morning meeting on 29 October, Wilson told Smith that he had made it clear to the African nationalist leaders that there would be no British military intervention in the event of a UDI, that the African nationalists could not expect majority rule in the immediate future, and that there could be no fixed timetable for transition to majority rule. Wilson then put forward two proposals: the first was a referendum of all Rhodesian

¹⁴⁹ TNA: PRO, PREM 13/543, 'Record of a meeting between Harold Wilson and a ZAPU delegation led by Joshua Nkomo, Government House, Salisbury', 27 October 1965, in Murphy (ed.) *BDEEP Series B, Vol. 9, Part II*, pp. 556-61; TNA: PRO, PREM 13/543, 'Record of a meeting between Harold Wilson and a ZANU delegation led by the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole, Government House, Salisbury', 27 October 1965, in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, pp. 206-12. See also Wilson, *The Labour Government*, pp. 158-59, for an account of his explosive reaction to Rhodesian maltreatment of the African nationalists, who had been left in a hot police van all day without food.

¹⁵⁰ For a detailed discussion see below, Ch. 2.

¹⁵¹ Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, p. 369. See also Wilson, *The Labour Government*, p. 163, for an account of Lord Graham's offensive behaviour at a social engagement. Smith remarked in his memoirs merely that 'Angus Graham, (the Duke of Montrose and my Minister of Agriculture) was in his element.' *Bitter Harvest*, p. 97.

taxpayers to test the Rhodesian Government's assertion that the majority of the Rhodesian people were in favour of independence on the basis of the 1961 Constitution; and the second was a Royal Commission, under the chairmanship of the Rhodesian Chief Justice, Hugh Beadle, 'to recommend the constitutional arrangements on the basis of which Rhodesia might proceed to independence as rapidly as possible in a manner acceptable to the people of the country as a whole.'¹⁵² Smith rejected the first proposal but agreed that his Cabinet should give careful consideration to the second. At a final meeting, Smith made a counter-proposal to Wilson that the Royal Commission should receive from the British and Rhodesian Governments an agreed independence constitution, which it would then put to the Rhodesian people to ascertain its acceptability. This, of course, raised two important questions: the nature of the independence constitution and the means by which its acceptability would be tested. Agreement on these points could obviously not be reached instantly, and Wilson said that he would have to consult his Cabinet on the matter (much to the annoyance of the Rhodesian ministers, who believed that this was simply another delaying tactic). Wilson was also scheduled to embark on consultations with Commonwealth leaders in Zambia, Nigeria, and Ghana before returning to London, so he left behind the Commonwealth Secretary and Attorney General to continue the discussions in Salisbury.¹⁵³ However, they were not able to resolve the points of

¹⁵² 'Record of a meeting held at Milton Buildings, Salisbury', 29 October 1965, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 111-16. See also: Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, p. 97; Wilson, *The Labour Government*, pp. 164-65; Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, p. 51; Wood, 'So far and no further!', pp. 429-31; and Young, *Rhodesia and Independence*, pp. 262-63.

¹⁵³ 'Record of a meeting held at the Prime Minister's residence, Salisbury', 29 October 1965, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 117-32. See also: Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, pp. 97-98; Wilson, *The Labour Government*, pp. 165-67; Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, pp. 52-53; Wood, 'So far and no further!', pp. 434-37; and Young, *Rhodesia and Independence*, pp. 264-68.

difference regarding the proposed constitution.¹⁵⁴ Smith advised Wilson that the Royal Commission was a non-starter unless the British Government agreed that the independence constitution should be acceptable to the Rhodesian Government. Smith also reasserted his claim that he had an agreement with the previous British Government that Rhodesia should be granted independence on the basis of the 1961 Constitution.¹⁵⁵

At Cabinet meetings on 1 and 2 November, British ministers debated four choices: (i) accept Smith's document for submission to the Royal Commission to see if the Rhodesian people wanted it; (ii) submit Smith's draft to the Commission while publicly dissociating the British Government from it; (iii) put both drafts before the Commission; or (iv) insist that only the British Government's draft be submitted. It was thought that that the first two options would buy some time, whereas the third and fourth options were likely to provoke a UDI.¹⁵⁶ The Cabinet agreed to support the second option, provided that the Royal Commission's report was unanimous and there was unanimous agreement on the mechanism for consulting the Rhodesian people.¹⁵⁷ Wilson put these terms to Smith, but he replied that they were so hedged with restrictions 'that the only conclusion to be derived from your letter is that it is tantamount to, and can only be interpreted as, a

¹⁵⁴ 'Report to the British and Rhodesian Governments: Independence of Rhodesia, Proposed Royal Commission', 31 October 1965, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 132-35. See also: Wood, *'So far and no further!'*, pp. 439-42; and Young, *Rhodesia and Independence*, pp. 268-69.

¹⁵⁵ Smith to Wilson, 31 October 1965, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 135-36.

¹⁵⁶ Barbara Castle, *The Castle Diaries 1964-1970* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984), pp. 62-63, entry for Tuesday 2 November; Crossman, *Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, Vol. 1, pp. 367-68, entry for Monday 1 November; Ponting, *Breach of Promise*, pp. 149-50.

¹⁵⁷ The Defence and Overseas Policy Committee also reiterated this position two days later. TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, Minutes of OPD (65) 48th Meeting, 3 November 1965, pp. 5-6.

rejection of the proposals agreed with you in Salisbury.’ He concluded: ‘the impression you left us with of a determined effort to resolve our constitutional problems has been utterly dissipated. It would seem that you have now finally closed the door which you claimed publicly to have opened.’¹⁵⁸ Meanwhile, on 5 November, a state of emergency was declared in Rhodesia, which was an obvious prelude to a UDI, even though the Rhodesian Government denied that this was the case.¹⁵⁹ There were further, desperate, efforts to prevent a UDI. At Wilson’s invitation Sir Hugh Beadle flew to London to discuss how the Royal Commission would work under the circumstances of a state of emergency, but Smith declared that Beadle was travelling ‘entirely on his own initiative.’¹⁶⁰ Wilson also offered to meet Smith again, this time in Malta, but Smith merely replied that no agreement was possible on the Royal Commission.¹⁶¹ On 10 November Wilson sent another lengthy message to Smith, reporting his discussions with

¹⁵⁸ Wilson to Smith, 3 November 1965; and Smith to Wilson, 6 November 1965, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 136-40.

¹⁵⁹ Flower, *Serving Secretly*, pp. 52-54; and Megahey, *Humphrey Gibbs*, pp. 106-07. According to one report, CRO officials were not sure what to make of the state of emergency. Desmond Lardner-Burke (the Rhodesian Minister of Justice, Law and Order) said it was intended to counter the threat from saboteurs, but British officials did not think that the security situation warranted this. Alternatively it was thought it could be designed to demonstrate the Rhodesian Government meant business and was an attempt to compel the British Government to accept Rhodesian terms for independence. Another possibility was that Smith was trying to placate the extremists in the Rhodesian Front and thereby maintain the unity of his government. ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 15, New Zealand High Commission, London, to Department of External Affairs, Wellington: Cable No. 3928, 5 November 1965.

¹⁶⁰ Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, p. 54; Wood, *So far and no further!*, p. 461; and Young, *Rhodesia and Independence*, p. 274.

¹⁶¹ Wilson to Smith, 7 November 1965; and Smith to Wilson, 8 November 1965, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 140-42.

Beadle, explaining the British Government's position on the Royal Commission, and once again suggesting a further meeting.¹⁶² Clive Ponting has commented:

By now the British government was essentially shadow-boxing to establish their position after UDI. Their aim was to show how hard they had tried to avoid it. But this was important politically because Wilson, who had carefully been keeping Heath in the picture, had obtained an undertaking that if he went to the absolute limit of concessions on the Royal Commission then the Conservatives would not support UDI.¹⁶³

On the night of 10 November Wilson received intelligence that a UDI would take place the next day. He telephoned Smith early the following morning, but it was too late to avert the course of action to which Smith was committed.¹⁶⁴ The Rhodesian Government unilaterally and illegally declared its independence at 11 a.m. that morning.¹⁶⁵

A critical analysis of the Anglo-Rhodesian negotiations

Was there ever any possibility of a negotiated settlement that would have averted a UDI? Robert Holland has contended that: 'Anglo-Rhodesian talks were really concerned with

¹⁶² Wilson to Smith, 10 November 1965, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 142-43.

¹⁶³ Ponting, *Breach of Promise*, pp. 150-51.

¹⁶⁴ Wilson, *The Labour Government*, pp. 169-71; Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, pp. 101-02. See also TNA: PRO, PREM 13/545, 'Transcript of a telephone conversation between Mr Wilson and Mr Smith', 11 November 1965, in Murphy (ed.) *BDEEP Series B, Vol. 9, Part II*, pp. 568-71; and Young, *Rhodesia and Independence*, pp. 534-37.

¹⁶⁵ For the Unilateral Declaration of Independence see Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, pp. 104-06.

the cultivation of images for media presentation, since the two sides were too far apart for a real agreement to be practicable.’¹⁶⁶ There is much to be said in favour of this argument, as the foregoing discussion has suggested. Although the British and Rhodesian Governments agreed that there could and should be no immediate transition to African majority rule, the Rhodesian Government made it clear in each round of substantive negotiations that it was not prepared to countenance transitional arrangements that would have produced majority rule within a timeframe acceptable to the British Government, international opinion, or Rhodesian African nationalists (for whom immediate majority rule was the only acceptable outcome).¹⁶⁷ The unwillingness of the Rhodesian Government to accept that the problem had international dimensions that conditioned the scope of any bilateral agreement was a serious handicap to the negotiations.

A further complication from the British perspective was that they were never really sure what to make of Smith.¹⁶⁸ In September 1964 British officials described Smith to Sir Alec Douglas-Home:

¹⁶⁶ Holland, *European Decolonization*, p. 234.

¹⁶⁷ It was never really clear what timeframe the Rhodesian Government *did* envisage. When Smith and Wilson met in January 1965 the Rhodesian Prime Minister suggested that his Government was looking at ways to extend European control for ‘60 or 70 years, or perhaps even longer’, but during negotiations in October 1965 Clifford Dupont, the Rhodesian Minister of Defence and External Affairs, said that he believed majority rule was ‘perhaps seven years ahead; but it might come more quickly, e.g., in only five years.’ TNA: PRO, PREM 13/534, ff 86-95, ‘Record of a meeting between Mr Wilson and Mr Smith’, by Derek J. Mitchell, Prime Minister’s Principal Private Secretary, 30 January 1965, para. 1, in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, p. 184; and ‘Record of a Meeting Held at the Prime Minister’s Residence, Salisbury’, 29 October 1965, Cmnd. 2807, p. 129.

¹⁶⁸ Young, *The Labour Governments 1964-70*, Vol. 2, p. 171.

He is a simple-minded, politically naïve, and uncomprehending character. His political approach has been described as ‘schoolboy’. He possesses a strong vein of schoolboy obstinacy and there is a mixture of schoolboy stubbornness, cunning and imperception about his speeches. Likewise there is a *Boys Own Paper* ring about his patriotic utterances. Nevertheless his pedestrian and humourless manner often conceals a shrewder assessment of a particular situation than at first appears on the surface and he should not be under-rated.¹⁶⁹

Wilson’s initial impression of Smith was that he was ‘very far round the bend’ and ‘a nut case’, but by October 1965 he no longer believed that Smith was ‘neurotic and temperamental’.¹⁷⁰ The British Government clearly came to believe that Smith wanted an agreement,¹⁷¹ and thought that Smith was different from the extremists in the Rhodesian Front.¹⁷² Yet even if the British Government were correct in its calculations that Smith was a moderate, it would have been difficult for Smith to sell an agreement to the

¹⁶⁹ Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, p. ix. Also quoted in *Rebellion* (BBC Television 1999), Part 1, ‘Treachery’.

¹⁷⁰ BLPES: Hetherington Papers, Hetherington/8/12, ‘Note of a meeting with Harold Wilson’, 11 January 1965; Hetherington/8/5, ‘Note of a meeting with the Prime Minister’, 10 February 1965; and Hetherington/10/3, ‘Note of a meeting with the Prime Minister’, 11 October 1965.

¹⁷¹ TNA: PRO, CAB 21/5513, MISC 51/1, Minutes of Meeting, 25 March 1965, in Murphy (ed.), *BDEEP Series B, Vol. 9, Part II*, p. 524; and TNA: PRO, CAB 130/228, Minutes of Cabinet Sub-Committee, 30 July 1965.

¹⁷² TNA: PRO, FO 371/181876, Minute from Lord Walston to Patrick Gordon Walker, 19 January 1965; TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, Minutes of OPD (65) 26th Meeting, 19 May 1965, p. 4; and Minutes of OPD (65) 49th Meeting, 7 November 1965, p. 3.

Rhodesian Front, as the British Government recognised.¹⁷³ This became obvious during Cledwyn Hughes' visit to Rhodesia in July 1965, when Smith had to give assurances to the Rhodesian Front Chairman, Lieutenant-Colonel William Knox, that 'the Government is not contemplating any action which could be construed as contravening the principles and policies of the Rhodesian Front' and that independence, whether negotiated or not, would be 'without strings'.¹⁷⁴

Given the difficulties of reaching a negotiated settlement of the independence issue, the British Government really ought to have considered negotiating for an alternative objective that it stood a much better chance of obtaining: a moratorium. For the Rhodesian Government, a moratorium may have been hard to contemplate. Southern Rhodesia had been a self-governing Colony since 1923, and the fact that it had not been granted full independence at the same time as Malawi and Zambia injured the pride of the Rhodesian Europeans. More importantly, the Rhodesian Government was explicit on many occasions that the state of the Rhodesian economy was the main reason why it must gain independence. Rhodesian ministers argued that only independence would create conditions of certainty that would attract investment, which Rhodesia desperately needed.¹⁷⁵ When Labour ministers suggested that there was only limited investment in

¹⁷³ TNA: PRO, CAB 21/5513, MISC 51/1, Minutes of Meeting, 25 March 1965, in Murphy (ed.), *BDEEP Series B, Vol. 9, Part II*, p. 524. 'There could be no certainty that Mr Smith would accept an agreement ... or that, even if he himself did so, he could carry his Government and the white population of Southern Rhodesia with him.'

¹⁷⁴ Quoted in Wood, *So far and no further!*, p. 332.

¹⁷⁵ NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, 'Visit to Ottawa by Mr J. H. Howman, Minister of Internal Affairs, Local Government and African Education of Southern Rhodesia, Sept. 12-13 1963', Memorandum by D. B. Hicks, African and Middle Eastern Division, Department of External Affairs

Rhodesia because of the threat of a UDI, Smith asserted: ‘the facts were that since his Party came to power three years before and began to campaign for independence, investment had substantially increased, even though it was still insufficient.’¹⁷⁶ In May 1965, Smith had publicly dismissed as impractical the Rhodesia Party’s idea of maintaining the *status quo* because it was economically and politically dangerous.¹⁷⁷ Yet this position was taken in the context of a general election campaign, when Smith was trying to distinguish the Rhodesian Front’s policy from those of its political rivals. It is interesting to note that in October 1965, Smith privately asked whether the Labour Government believed ‘that an alternative lay in the maintenance of the *status quo*’, and that Wilson rejected this.¹⁷⁸ This was surely a mistake. A moratorium on the

[hereafter DEA], Ottawa, 21 October 1963, para. 13. RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, Ralph Collins, Canadian Ambassador to Pretoria, to DEA, Ottawa, Cable No. 85, 3 July 1964. ‘Record of a Meeting Held at 10 Downing Street’, 7 September 1964, Cmnd. 2807, p. 23. TNA: PRO, PREM 13/534, ff 86-95, ‘Record of a meeting between Mr Wilson and Mr Smith’, by Derek J. Mitchell, Prime Minister’s Principal Private Secretary, 30 January 1965, para. 6, in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, p. 185.

¹⁷⁶ ‘Record of a Meeting Held at 10 Downing Street’, 8 October 1965, Cmnd. 2807, p. 86. Smith also contended that as long as the British Government retained some say in Rhodesia’s internal affairs there would never be political unity because the African nationalists would continue to look to London for support rather than seeking a solution with the Rhodesian Government.

¹⁷⁷ Wood, ‘*So far and no further!*’, p. 310.

¹⁷⁸ ‘Record of a Meeting Held at 10 Downing Street’, 8 October 1965, Cmnd. 2807, p. 86. On the day of UDI Wilson contradicted himself by telling Smith: ‘We have never said, as far as I am aware, that there is anything against continuing as you are’, and ‘we have never ruled out the *status quo*.’ TNA: PRO, PREM 13/545, ‘Transcript of a telephone conversation between Mr Wilson and Mr Smith’, 11 November 1965, in Murphy (ed.) *BDEEP Series B, Vol. 9, Part II*, pp. 569 and 570; and Young, *Rhodesia and Independence*, pp. 535 and 536. When Smith and Wilson met in January 1965, they were both explicit that the *status quo* was unacceptable. TNA: PRO, PREM 13/534, ff 86-95, ‘Record of a meeting between Mr Wilson and Mr

independence issue would have suited the British Government because in the short term it would have allowed it to focus on a plethora of other domestic and foreign policy problems. It would also have removed the threat of a UDI, given time to implement confidence-building measures among the Europeans in Rhodesia, and to prepare the Africans for majority rule. This was in fact suggested by Oliver Wright in advance of the final round of negotiations in Salisbury.¹⁷⁹ It should have been a British objective from a much earlier stage, for it was blindingly obvious that the economic situation in Rhodesia presented an opportunity that the Labour Government could have exploited to its advantage.

In July 1964 the Rhodesian Government requested financial assistance from the South African Government in the form of a public loan of £2.5 million and a government-to-government loan for a further £2.5 million. The South African Government stipulated that the second loan should be used for non-military purposes, such as irrigation projects, railway and canal construction, expansion of hydroelectric power, and the building of an airport at Chiredzi. This stipulation masked the real purpose of the loan, as Sue Onslow has recently commented:

The clandestine agreement behind this apparently anodyne financial arrangement was that the money thus saved by the Southern Rhodesian exchequer could then be diverted into national defence, offsetting the

Smith', by Derek J. Mitchell, Prime Minister's Principal Private Secretary, 30 January 1965, para. 1, in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, p. 183.

¹⁷⁹ TNA: PRO, PREM 13/542. ff 91-93, 'Visit to Rhodesia: October 1965', Minute by J. O. Wright, 22 October 1965, in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, p. 205.

anticipated shortfall in tax revenue caused by falling investment and obviating the need for tax increases in an acutely sensitive political environment.¹⁸⁰

This demonstrates that the Rhodesian Government was short of money: it could not afford the burden of increasing defence expenditure and the financing of major infrastructure projects simultaneously. At the same time that Ian Smith was negotiating the loans from the South African Government he told the Canadian ambassador in South Africa that the level of British aid to Rhodesia was almost negligible. Further, Smith said that British aid was directed towards the Africans in Rhodesia, whereas private capital was flowing towards the Europeans, so he was unconcerned that the British Government might discontinue its aid because it would hurt the Africans rather than Europeans.¹⁸¹ In October 1965 a delegation from the Confederation of British Industry told Wilson that in a recent visit they had noticed: ‘Much play had been made in Rhodesia that whereas Britain gave a vast quantity of aid to other African countries, she has given nothing to Rhodesia over the last few years.’¹⁸² It was untrue that Britain had given nothing, but British aid to Rhodesia was limited, and the aid issue generated tension rather than goodwill. The Rhodesian Government had been promised £4 million following the dissolution of the Central African Federation, and had received £2 million by the time that the Labour Government came into office. The remaining £2 million was due to be

¹⁸⁰ Sue Onslow, ‘A Question of Timing: South Africa and Rhodesia’s Unilateral Declaration of Independence, 1964-65’, *Cold War History*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (May 2005), p. 136.

¹⁸¹ NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, Ralph Collins, Canadian Ambassador to Pretoria, to DEA, Ottawa, Cable No. 85, 3 July 1964, Part 3, ‘The economic situation’.

¹⁸² ‘Record of a Meeting between Mr Wilson and a delegation from the Confederation of British Industry’, 19 October 1965, Murphy (ed.) *BDEEP Series B, Vol. 9, Part II*, p. 554.

paid in April 1965, but the Labour Government indicated that it had reservations about releasing this money whilst the Rhodesian Government contemplated a UDI. The Rhodesian Government interpreted this as ‘financial blackmail’ and accused the British Government of ‘immoral behaviour’.¹⁸³ When Wilson met with Smith in January 1965, he said that the British Government was prepared to enter into negotiations about financial aid and whilst it was ‘not taking the line that these should be suspended because there had been talk of a unilateral declaration of independence ... the signing of a cheque must depend on the state of relations between the two Governments at the time.’¹⁸⁴ Wilson subsequently confirmed that the British Government would pay the remaining £2 million in April (unless there was a UDI), and pointed out that his Government had also provided other forms of financial assistance, including a guarantee for a World Bank loan of £2.75 million to the Kariba Dam authority, and a loan of £1.5 million from the Commonwealth Development Corporation (a British Government agency) to Central African Airways. Although Smith was not unappreciative of these various forms of assistance, he asserted that the British Government’s warning statement of 27 October 1964 ‘had definitely [had] an inhibiting effect upon the attitude of both British and foreign investment in Rhodesia.’¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ Smith to Wilson, 13 January 1965, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 53-55. TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, Minutes of OPD (65) 3rd Meeting, 21 January 1965, p. 3; CAB 148/19, OPD (65) 10, ‘Southern Rhodesia’, Memorandum by Arthur Bottomley, 19 January 1965, para. 1.

¹⁸⁴ TNA: PRO, PREM 13/534, ff 86-95, ‘Record of a meeting between Mr Wilson and Mr Smith’, by Derek J. Mitchell, Prime Minister’s Principal Private Secretary, 30 January 1965, para. 5, in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, pp. 184-85.

¹⁸⁵ Wilson to Smith, 29 March 1965; and Smith to Wilson, 23 April 1965, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 59-61. See also Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, pp. 84-85.

It may certainly be argued that Wilson's position was not unreasonable, but perhaps a bolder financial approach would have yielded better political results. What the British could have done at this juncture was to offer a much bigger incentive: in other words, to buy off the Rhodesian Government. In November 1964 Arthur Bottomley and Barbara Castle suggested that the British Government should offer 'considerable' financial and technical assistance, and send an economic mission to Rhodesia, but 'not before there has been progress in the political talks, since otherwise Mr Smith will use it against us by saying that we are trying to bribe his Government to abandon their objectives.'¹⁸⁶ Given the state of the Rhodesian Government's finances this is debatable, but it is of course necessary to consider what level of financial aid might have been sufficient to induce a more cooperative attitude on the part of the Rhodesian Government, and whether Britain could afford the sums of money required. In May 1964 the former Rhodesian Prime Minister, Garfield Todd, wrote to Sir Alec Douglas-Home suggesting that the British Government should be prepared to offer substantial assistance of £10 million per year for ten years in order to facilitate a political agreement.¹⁸⁷ Of course, the political situation in Rhodesia made financial bargaining a very difficult issue, and it is by no means certain that the Rhodesian Government would have been prepared to concede a specific timetable for African majority rule. It may, however, have been prepared to stop talking about the need for a UDI, which would have reduced the tension in Anglo-Rhodesian relations. It might also have been more reasonable about arrangements for an accelerated educational

¹⁸⁶ TNA: PRO, PREM 13/87, 'Southern Rhodesia – policy and tactics', Minute by Sir Burke Trend to Harold Wilson, 24 November 1964, in Murphy (ed.) *BDEEP Series B, Vol. 9, Part II*, pp. 498-99.

¹⁸⁷ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 9, Garfield Todd and Hardwicke Holderness to Sir Alec Douglas-Home, Letter, 15 May 1964.

programme for Africans, land reform, and a gradual extension of the franchise, if the Europeans in Rhodesia stood to benefit substantially from British aid.

Could Britain afford an agreement of this kind, both politically and economically? £100 million over ten years was indeed a substantial sum, though major levels of transitional aid for newly independent countries were not unprecedented.¹⁸⁸ From a political point of view, if the aid package were not tied explicitly to a timetable for independence then it would no doubt have been difficult for the British Government to ‘sell’ it to the Labour Party, the British public, and African nationalists. From an economic perspective, the British Government would have found it difficult to increase its level of aid to the figures suggested by Todd, since this would have taken a disproportionate share (one-sixth) of Britain’s annual African aid budget. With the benefit of hindsight it is also obvious that massive aid would have become more difficult in the context of the Wilson Government’s subsequent economic retrenchment, which cut deep into total overseas development funds.¹⁸⁹ On the other hand, in June 1965 the Board of Trade warned that the annual balance of payments costs to Britain of economic sanctions against Rhodesia in the event

¹⁸⁸ When Malta became independent in September 1964 Britain signed a defence agreement and a financial agreement that were designed to ease Malta’s loss of service expenditure. Britain paid £5 million annually to station troops in Malta and to use air and naval facilities, and contributed £29.5 million (75 per cent loan and 25 per cent grant) over five years to develop new industry and tourism. Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part III*, p. 99, editor’s note.

¹⁸⁹ In 1966 Britain provided £63 million to African countries, of which £60 million was allocated to Commonwealth countries. The sterling crisis of 1965 generated cuts in the overall aid budget from £250 million to £225 million and as a result of the 1966 sterling crisis a further £20 million was pruned from the aid programme for 1967-68. Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part I*, pp. cvii and cxvii. See also Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, Ch. 12 ‘The Sterling Area, Trade, and Aid’, especially pp. 296-306.

of a UDI could be anywhere between £50 and £200 million.¹⁹⁰ On that basis the British Government might have calculated that aid of £100 million over ten years represented excellent value if it could be tied to a Rhodesian pledge of good behaviour. If the aid package could have been used to secure an agreement for a specific transition to African majority rule rather than a moratorium on the independence issue then so much the better. In the absence of a firm plan to obtain either, the British Government needed to ensure that its contingency plans to meet the eventuality of a UDI were sound. However, it was in this crucial respect that the formulation of Labour's policy was weakest.

British contingency planning for a UDI

Historian John Young has observed that from Wilson's viewpoint, 'it was a success to defer UDI as long as possible, delaying a crisis in which unpleasant, and economically costly, decisions would have to be made.'¹⁹¹ However, although the British Government sought to defer a UDI for as long as possible it was simultaneously engaged in an enormously complex contingency planning operation, which was weakened by some major deficiencies. First, there was a plethora of committees involved in the process, which meant that few officials or ministers had a clear view of the overall situation. This suited Wilson because it augmented his control over the Government's Rhodesian policy, especially the decision to implement economic sanctions against Rhodesia despite the fact that officials and ministers harboured many doubts about this. Second, the Government's

¹⁹⁰ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181877, 'Implications of economic pressure against Rhodesia', Paper by the Commercial Relations and Export Department of the Board of Trade, 12 May 1965, in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, pp. 188-90.

¹⁹¹ Young, *The Labour Governments 1964-70*, Vol. 2, p. 171.

contingency planning lacked sufficient momentum. Crucial decisions were often deferred pending an assessment of the circumstances that prevailed at the time of a UDI, which hindered coordination with the Old Commonwealth and the United States,¹⁹² and inhibited the initial response to UDI. Third, contingency planning involved many departments and it generated bureaucratic conflict over key issues. Rhodesia was chiefly within the remit of the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO), but the Cabinet Office, Foreign Office (FO), Ministry of Defence, Treasury, Board of Trade, Department for Economic Affairs, Ministry of Power, and the Home Office were all concerned with various aspects of the Rhodesian Crisis. One scholar has suggested: ‘it is not clear that any interdepartmental rivalry reflected actual differences of opinion on how to resolve the Rhodesian Crisis.’¹⁹³ Yet as the following discussion demonstrates, this is clearly at variance with the considerable weight of evidence in The National Archives, which indicates concern in the FO about complacency and inefficiency in the CRO.¹⁹⁴

Peter Hennessy has observed that: ‘Wilson bids fair to be the untidiest of all the postwar premiers in administrative terms despite his pride in his houstraining.’¹⁹⁵ This refers to

¹⁹² This is discussed at length below, in Chs. 4 and 6.

¹⁹³ Richard Coggins, ‘The British Government and Rhodesian UDI’, paper presented in ‘Rhodesian UDI’, Institute of Contemporary British History Witness Seminar, Public Records Office, Kew, 6 September 2000. Available at: <http://www.icbh.ac.uk/witness/rhodesia>

¹⁹⁴ See also Joe Garner, *The Commonwealth Office 1925-1968* (London: Heinemann, 1978), Ch. 2, ‘The Office’. Garner, who was the CRO Permanent Under Secretary at the time of UDI, acknowledges the conflict with other departments, as well as criticism of the CRO in Parliament and the press.

¹⁹⁵ Peter Hennessy, *The Prime Minister. The Office and Its Holders since 1945* (New York: St. Martin’s, 2001), p. 310. The term ‘houstraining’ refers to the fact that Wilson was one of only three Labour Ministers to have served in the Cabinet before.

Wilson's practice of creating numerous miscellaneous committees to handle various aspects of government business. This was especially pronounced on the Rhodesian question, which reflected 'the sheer scale of the problem and the breadth of its institutional impact'.¹⁹⁶ British contingency planning took place largely outside the full Cabinet, in various ad hoc Cabinet sub-committees on Rhodesia,¹⁹⁷ the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee,¹⁹⁸ the Defence and Overseas Policy (Official) Committee,¹⁹⁹ and the Defence and Overseas Policy (Official) Working Party on Southern Rhodesia.²⁰⁰ The number of committees proliferated even further after UDI.²⁰¹ On the surface this appears inefficient, but there was obviously a method in Wilson's administrative

¹⁹⁶ Young, *The Labour Governments 1964-70*, Vol. 2, p. 16. See also Hennessy, *The Prime Minister*, pp. 307-08.

¹⁹⁷ TNA: PRO, CAB 130/206, 'Southern Rhodesia: Meetings and Papers', October-November 1964; CAB 130/208, 'Working party on Southern Rhodesia: Meetings', October-November 1964; CAB 130/209, 'Working party on Southern Rhodesia: Papers', October-November 1964; CAB 130/228, 'Southern Rhodesia: Meetings and Papers', March-July 1965; CAB 130/244, 'Southern Rhodesia: Action in the event of a UDI (Meetings)', October-November 1965; and CAB 130/245, 'Southern Rhodesia: Action in the event of a UDI (Papers)', October-November 1965.

¹⁹⁸ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/17, 'Defence and Overseas Policy Committee: Meetings and Papers, OPD Series', October-December 1964; TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, 'Defence and Overseas Policy Committee: Meetings, OPD Series', January-December 1965; TNA: PRO, CAB 148/19-24, 'Defence and Overseas Policy Committee: Papers, OPD Series', January-December 1965;

¹⁹⁹ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/40, 'Defence and Overseas Policy (Official) Committee: Meetings and Papers, OPD (O) Series', October-November 1964; TNA: PRO, CAB 148/41, 'Defence and Overseas Policy (Official) Committee: Meetings, OPD (O) Series', January-December 1965; and TNA: PRO, CAB 148/42-45, 'Defence and Overseas Policy (Official) Committee: Papers, OPD (O) Series', January-December 1965.

²⁰⁰ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/67, 'Working Party on Southern Rhodesia', March 1965-September 1966. See also TNA: PRO, CAB 165/59, for composition and terms of reference of OPD (O) (SR).

²⁰¹ TNA: PRO, CAB 134/3150-3168, 'Rhodesia and Related Matters', May 1966-December 1969.

madness. As noted above, the decision to rule out the use of force was taken by a Cabinet sub-committee, which was much more limited in its composition than the DOPC – let alone the full Cabinet – and this made it easier for Wilson to impose himself on important policy issues.²⁰² John Young has noted that: ‘Official committees often failed to resolve differences or produce compromise positions and appeal was possible from ministerial committees to the full Cabinet, though Wilson tried to restrict the frequency of this.’²⁰³ Barbara Castle, the most radical minister in the Labour Government, later commented: ‘Few members of the Cabinet were privy to the crucial discussions that were going on behind the scenes’, and Richard Crossman similarly observed: ‘there is nothing decided at Cabinet unless the P.M. specifically wants to have it discussed there.’²⁰⁴ Castle complained bitterly in her diary that Wilson did his best to keep key foreign policy issues – including South Africa, Rhodesia, and Vietnam – off the Cabinet agenda, and Crossman confirmed that half the Cabinet was excluded from the ‘defence and foreign policy group’.²⁰⁵ When crucial matters did reach the Cabinet they usually resulted in lengthy discussion, as Castle commented in early 1965: ‘I am afraid Harold is not a strong enough chairman and the discussions drag on endlessly.’²⁰⁶ George Brown apparently confirmed

²⁰² See above, p. 42.

²⁰³ Young, *The Labour Governments 1964-70*, Vol. 2, p. 16.

²⁰⁴ Castle, *The Castle Diaries 1964-1970*, p. xiv; and Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, Vol. 1, p. 201, entry for Sunday 18 April 1965.

²⁰⁵ Castle, *The Castle Diaries 1964-1970*, pp. 19-20, entries for Tuesday 16 March and Thursday 18 March 1965. When Wilson did allow a full Cabinet debate on foreign policy matters there was insufficient time to discuss southern Africa. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27, entry for Tuesday 30 March 1965. Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, Vol. 1, p. 201, entry for Sunday 18 April 1965.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5, entry for Friday 5 February 1965.

these impressions specifically in relation to Rhodesia, when he told one newspaper editor shortly before UDI:

Wilson has no idea no idea how to conduct Cabinet business. Rhodesia was referred to a Cabinet committee of six. Its report was submitted to Cabinet supposedly for adoption ... [but] the whole thing was debated afresh – Dick Crossman, Frank Cousins and Barbara Castle very much to the fore. After hours of discussion ... the whole matter was referred to a fresh committee!²⁰⁷

Yet these assessments by Castle and Brown do not convey the more relevant observation that Wilson *deliberately* adopted these Cabinet management methods, as Peter Hennessy has observed: ‘Wilson used prolixity as a weapon, allowing the Cabinet to talk itself out.’²⁰⁸ By the time that everyone in the Cabinet had expressed their views they were either bored or exhausted, at which point Wilson would sum up the discussion in favour of the policy that he wished to adopt. Wilson’s dominance over his Cabinet was also reinforced by the fact that he ‘knew more about the nitty-gritty of foreign affairs than the rest of the Government put together’,²⁰⁹ and also because most ministers were absorbed

²⁰⁷ Cecil King, *The Cecil King Diary 1965-1970* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972), p. 38, entry for Tuesday 14th October 1965.

²⁰⁸ Hennessy, *The Prime Minister*, p. 289.

²⁰⁹ Ted Short, Wilson’s first Chief Whip. Quoted in Young, *The Labour Governments 1964-70*, Vol. 2, p. 2. Crossman also commented that Wilson ‘has completely dominated foreign affairs and defence’. *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, Vol. 1, p. 203, entry for Sunday 18 April 1965.

with the work of their departments, which Wilson encouraged.²¹⁰ All this may have been politically convenient for the Prime Minister, but it reduced the collegiality of decision-making and in the case of the Rhodesian Crisis it resulted in the adoption of Wilson's preferred policy of economic sanctions, which was never considered likely to achieve the collapse of the Rhodesian economy.²¹¹

The second weakness of the Government's contingency planning was its lack of momentum. As soon as the Labour Government was elected it began to consider what it would do in the event of a UDI. The Government was able to give some general indications of its intended actions in its warning statement of 27 October 1964, but the major decisions were consistently deferred. Following the visit of Bottomley and Gardiner to Rhodesia in February-March 1965, the DOPC decided that the Government's contingency plans – such as they were – should be re-examined.²¹² By May, officials had identified many relevant issues. The Government had agreed 'first action' measures to be taken in the event of a UDI, such as termination of diplomatic representation in London and Salisbury, and application of an arms embargo, but officials suggested that many

²¹⁰ Castle, *The Castle Diaries 1964-1970*, p. 20, entry for Tuesday 16 March 1965; Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, Vol. 1, p. 203, entry for Sunday 18 April 1965.

²¹¹ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181877, 'Implications of economic pressure against Rhodesia', Paper by the Commercial Relations and Export Department of the Board of Trade, 12 May 1965; TNA: PRO, CAB 130/244, MISC 84/18, 'The impact on the Rhodesian economy of measures in the event of a UDI', Minutes of a meeting of officials, Item 3, 5 November 1965; both in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, pp. 188-90 and 213; TNA: PRO, CAB 130/242, MISC 84/26, 'Action in the event of a UDI', Note by the Department for Economic Affairs, 4 November 1965, in Murphy (ed.) *BDEEP Series B, Vol. 9, Part II*, pp. 561-65.

²¹² TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, Minutes of OPD (65) 13th Meeting, 5 March 1965, p. 4.

further decisions could only be made in the light of the circumstances that prevailed at the time of a UDI.²¹³ The DOPC therefore determined that no decisions should be taken in advance concerning crucial matters, including the introduction of an Enabling Bill, application of a comprehensive trade embargo, exclusion of Rhodesia from Her Majesty's Dominions, and denial of British citizenship to Rhodesians (although the DOPC directed that preparations should be made to facilitate these).²¹⁴ Shortly thereafter the Cabinet Secretary informed the Prime Minister: 'In terms of our own domestic action – draft Bills, Orders in Council, Regulations, etc. – we are now reasonably ready.'²¹⁵ However, this simply did not accord with the reality of the situation, as the Cabinet Secretary himself acknowledged at the beginning of October. He pointed out a whole range of outstanding issues in the UDI 'war book', including: the Government's public statement to be issued in the event of a UDI; the contents of the Enabling Bill; and the nature of the economic sanctions that the Government intended to implement.²¹⁶ It was not until Wilson began the penultimate round of negotiations with the Rhodesian Government that discussions in

²¹³ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/21, OPD (65) 81, 'Preparation for action in the event of a UDI', Note by the Chairman of the Defence and Overseas Policy (Official) Committee, 30 April 1965.

²¹⁴ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, Minutes of OPD (65) 24th Meeting, 5 May 1965, pp. 4-6.

²¹⁵ TNA: PRO, PREM 13/536, Minute by Sir Burke Trend to Harold Wilson, 18 May 1965, para. 4, in Murphy (ed.) *BDEEP Series B, Vol. 9, Part II*, p. 529.

²¹⁶ TNA: PRO, PREM 13/536, Minute by Sir Burke Trend to Harold Wilson, 1 October 1965, in Murphy (ed.) *BDEEP Series B, Vol. 9, Part II*, pp. 538-39. At that stage the most recent document dealing with British preparations was TNA: PRO, CAB 148/22, OPD (65) 132, 'Contingency Planning for a Unilateral declaration of Independence', Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 21 September 1965.

the DOPC gained sufficient momentum to seriously address many of the outstanding issues associated with the British Government's likely response to UDI.²¹⁷

Nevertheless, in some respects UDI still caught the British Government unprepared, which may be illustrated by two examples. When Cecil King, the Chairman of International Publishing Corporation – which owned the *Daily Mirror* and the *Sun* newspapers – enquired whether Rhodesian funds in the UK would be frozen, he was told that no decision had been taken. This prompted him to write in his diary that a UDI 'has been on the cards for four *years*, so surely the appropriate moves could have been decided before this.'²¹⁸ Similarly, when the British High Commission in Lagos asked what statement it should issue to indicate to the people of Africa what action the British Government would take against Rhodesia, it found that there were no standing instructions. Consequently, the First Secretary had to concoct a statement based on what he thought the British Government might be considering. The press release, entitled 'Britain Vows to Bring Down Smith', stated that the British Government would implement economic sanctions, institute an arms embargo, and apply foreign exchange

²¹⁷ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, Minutes of OPD (65) 43rd Meeting, 7 October 1965; OPD (65) 44th Meeting, 15 October 1965; OPD (65) 45th Meeting, 20 October 1965; OPD (65) 46th Meeting, 29 October 1965; OPD (65) 47th Meeting, 3 November 1965; and OPD (65) 50th Meeting, 11 November 1965, when it was determined that officials should meet as soon as possible to consider any further points concerning the executive action required that might need further reference to ministers.

²¹⁸ King, *The Cecil King Diary 1965-1970*, p. 42, entry for Thursday 11 November 1965. For DOPC discussion of exchange control measures see TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, Minutes of OPD (65) 43rd Meeting, Item 2, 7 October 1965; OPD (65) 47th Meeting, Item 3, 3 November 1965; and OPD (65) 50th Meeting, 11 November 1965, when it was decided that until the Enabling Bill was enacted, probably on 15 November, it would be undesirable for any statement to be made concerning action to be taken in respect of Rhodesian sterling balances.

and travel restrictions. The press release was well received in Nigeria and – unlike elsewhere in Africa – no British diplomatic or cultural premises were subject to demonstration or damage.²¹⁹ These examples justify the comments of Paul Gore-Booth, Head of the Diplomatic Service from 1965, who recalled in his memoirs:

One of the great difficulties was the idea prevalent in the summer of 1965 that, if the British Government were too obviously working on what would happen should Mr Ian Smith unilaterally declare independence, this might incite him to do so. This doctrine tended to be quoted when we in the Foreign Office worried about inadequate information and so we had to suspend worrying. But he declared it anyway, and the necessary information was not there.²²⁰

The third problem associated with the Government's contingency planning was bureaucratic conflict between the FO and CRO, which can be illustrated in two ways. First, FO officials were worried about the poor state of liaison between the British and U.S. Governments. A sound understanding between the United Kingdom and the United States at the political and official levels was essential to ensure effective joint contingency planning to support the Zambian economy in the event of a UDI, which was

²¹⁹ Churchill Archive Centre, Cambridge: Diplomatic Oral History Programme, GBR/0014/DOHP 66, Cecil Roy Dean, First Secretary, Lagos (1964-1968), 'The Power of a Press Release', unpublished article, November 1965. For the reaction in some other African capitals see Foreign Office reports in TNA: PRO, FO 371/181883.

²²⁰ Paul Gore-Booth, *With Truth and Great Respect* (London: Constable, 1974), p. 331.

a fundamental Anglo-American concern.²²¹ Second, the FO and the CRO diverged on the objectives of British policy, and the most efficacious means of achieving those objectives. FO officials felt that the CRO had given little consideration to the pressures that the British Government was likely to face as a result of the international reaction to a UDI, particularly in the United Nations, where responsibility for defending British policy and interests rested with the FO, not the CRO. In May 1965, Derrick March, an official in the FO West and Central Africa Department wrote:

I am afraid it is clear that the CRO have not done any thinking on this question. It is one of the great faults of the Sub-Committee on Rhodesia that although many papers have been prepared on detailed aspects of a unilateral declaration of independence nothing has been written about the reactions of Afro-Asian Governments, the OAU and the United Nations, and the effect on our international position if [Her Majesty's Government] did nothing to put an effective end to the rebellion.²²²

March argued that if economic warfare broke out between Rhodesia and Zambia, and the UN passed a resolution in Chapter VII terms, the British Government would have to demonstrate that it was willing to support African and UN forces to overthrow the rebel government.²²³ March observed that if this situation was reached, the British

²²¹ See below, Ch. 6, for an extensive discussion of the problems that this caused in Anglo-American relations.

²²² TNA: PRO, FO 371/181877, Minute by Derrick March, 24 May 1965.

²²³ Chapter VII of the UN Charter is concerned with 'Action with respect to threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression', i.e. situations that constitute a threat to the maintenance of international peace and security. This provides for Member States not actively concerned with a dispute to

Government would have to consider the use of British troops to end the rebellion which would, in any case, be very much cheaper than the threat posed by economic sanctions to the whole Sterling area envisaged by the Board of Trade. March argued that the British Government should not allow a minority of 217,000 Europeans, of whom 75 per cent were women and children, ‘to hold our whole international policy to ransom.’ He suggested that the Rhodesian Government would not contemplate a UDI if the British Government demonstrated sufficient resolve, but acknowledged that the situation might deteriorate ‘if the Rhodesian Government proceeds on the assumption that troops would never be used in any circumstances.’²²⁴

There was not much sympathy in the FO towards suggestions that force might have to be used.²²⁵ However, senior officials certainly emphasised the need satisfy, so far as possible, public opinion in Britain, in Africa, and in the United Nations, without running Britain into bankruptcy in the process.²²⁶ The FO therefore favoured measures with presentational value that could be implemented at little economic cost to Britain, such as

take action against the state responsible for the existence of a dispute. The Foreign Office was concerned that the CRO did not understand the difficulties that the British Government was likely to face as a result. See TNA: PRO, FO 371/181879, *passim*.

²²⁴ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181877, Minute by Derrick March, 24 May 1965. Emphasis in the original.

²²⁵ One official suggested that ‘no responsible government could willingly initiate the use of force for the solution of a political problem in the present situation in Africa. The experience of the Congo is surely too recent to be forgotten, and no one can foresee how, when released from the bottle, the genie of force could be put back. The one thing that does seem certain is that if force were employed against Rhodesia one of the principal and most immediate sufferers would be Zambia.’ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181879, C. M. MacLehose to Oliver Wright, 28 September 1965.

²²⁶ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181877, Minute by Sir Roger Allen, 10 June 1965; and Minute by R. J. M. Wilson, 14 June 1965.

the exclusion of Rhodesia from Her Majesty's Dominions. The CRO, on the other hand, believed that stringent economic measures would work if given sufficient time and there was therefore no need to consider exclusion. In July 1965, Arthur Bottomley wrote to the Prime Minister: 'Such a Bill will not be required until some time after any unilateral declaration of independence, and only then if we have decided, in the light of developments, to accept the success of the declaration, which we hope will not happen.'²²⁷ FO officials were unhappy with Bottomley's proposal that no further action should be taken, and Martin Le Quesne therefore prepared a draft minute of opposition for consideration by the Foreign Secretary. Meanwhile the Prime Minister took advice from Sir Burke Trend and the FO was advised that Wilson concurred with Bottomley's proposal. Michael Stewart then wrote to the Prime Minister:

I think that we are all agreed that if a UDI takes place there will be a period during which we hope that the various forms of economic and political pressure open to us will serve to bring public opinion in Rhodesia to its senses and so bring about a return to legality. It seems to me, however, that we must, at any rate in our planning, admit the possibility that these measures will not succeed in their object and that we shall at some stage be faced with the necessity of taking the serious step of declaring that Rhodesia is no longer one of Her Majesty's Dominions.²²⁸

Stewart accepted that the problems involved were complex, but argued that these would not become any easier to resolve after a UDI had taken place. He suggested that Africans

²²⁷ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181878, Bottomley to Wilson, 12 July 1965.

²²⁸ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181878, Stewart to Wilson, 20 July 1965.

would want the British Government to take action quickly and it would be embarrassing if the Government eventually decided to take the step and then had to wait for an official study to be prepared. Stewart therefore recommended that the problem should be considered immediately in order to identify and define the issues involved.²²⁹

Bottomley responded: 'The Bill would legally end the Rhodesian rebellion by admitting its success. It would terminate all responsibility of Britain for Rhodesia and make her a foreign country. It would put the world on notice that we washed our hands of the Rhodesian problem.' With regard to the point raised by Stewart concerning the likely reaction of Africans, Bottomley contended: 'I take the opposite view and believe that Africans would criticise us strongly and accuse us of connivance if we passed the ultimate legislation with indecent haste.' Bottomley averred that it was not difficult to identify and define the issues with which the legislation would be concerned: some sixty Acts of Parliament applying to Rhodesia would have to be examined. Further, the experience of South Africa leaving the Commonwealth had indicated what issues would be involved if Rhodesia were to be excluded. Bottomley therefore concluded that he did not wish to amend his original recommendation to which the Prime Minister had agreed.²³⁰

Le Quesne remained unhappy and discussed the matter further with officials in the CRO.²³¹ Although they were agreed that there would be a period after UDI during which the British Government would try to bring Rhodesia back to legality, they differed on the time scale involved. The CRO believed that this period might be as long as five years,

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181878, Bottomley to Wilson, 27 July 1965.

²³¹ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181878, Minute by Le Quesne, 13 August 1965.

which the FO thought quite unrealistic; Le Quesne suggested six months was more likely. He refuted Bottomley's view that Rhodesia's expulsion from the Commonwealth was likely to be interpreted as evidence of collusion between the British and Rhodesian Governments. On the contrary, if the British Government failed to act quickly *then* Britain would be accused of acquiescence and collusion. Le Quesne commented: 'It is true that it would also constitute an admission of our inability forcibly to impose our will on Rhodesia. But this is a fact which we at any rate accept and which, in the circumstances envisaged, will in any case have become apparent to all.'²³² Le Quesne observed that as the Prime Minister had already endorsed Bottomley's proposal, there was no point in challenging the accepted view. However, he suggested that a draft minute should be prepared for the Foreign Secretary in order to make the Prime Minister aware of the difference of view between the FO and CRO. The minute was sent on 31 August 1965, and recommended that the issue should be given further consideration in the official Rhodesia sub-committee.²³³ In September the DOPC began to lean towards the Foreign Office position and encouraged a meeting between FO and CRO officials to revise the Government's contingency plans.²³⁴ When the meeting took place, CRO officials continued to profess their belief that if the British Government expelled Rhodesia from the Commonwealth it would be seen as connivance and would lead to the disintegration of the Commonwealth.²³⁵ They did agree, however, that it was unrealistic

²³² Ibid.

²³³ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181878, Stewart to Wilson, 31 August 1965.

²³⁴ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, Minutes of OPD (65) 40th Meeting, Item 4, 22 September 1965. The Committee invited the FO and CRO to arrange for OPD (65) 132 Annex II to be amended to reflect the possibility that further measures to those proposed by the CRO might be necessary in the context of the likely response at the UN.

²³⁵ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181878, Minute by Le Quesne, 1 October 1965.

to think in terms of the British Government holding its position at the UN for up to five years, but CRO officials apparently told their FO colleagues that Bottomley refused to admit the possibility that the British Government's contingency measures would fail.²³⁶ This was at variance with the views of the FO, and the difference of opinion was never resolved. Shortly before UDI, Le Quesne wrote to his counterpart in the CRO, Derrick Watson: 'I am sorry to keep reverting to this point, but we would be extremely grateful if you could let us have a reasoned statement of the grounds on which we believe that the measures which we propose to take against Rhodesia in the event of a UDI will be successful.'²³⁷ The absence of such a 'reasoned statement' can only be explained by the fact that there were no reasonable grounds on which to base the assumption that British objectives *could* be achieved by the measures that the Government proposed to take in the event of a UDI. This makes an even bigger nonsense of Wilson's remark at Lagos in January 1966 that 'the cumulative effects of the economic and financial sanctions might well bring the rebellion to an end within a matter of weeks rather than months.'²³⁸

Conclusion

In his biography of Wilson Philip Ziegler observed that if the Labour Government's foreign policy problems are considered in isolation it risks 'misrepresenting the atmosphere in which such problems were considered and decisions made', because Wilson had to grapple with so many interrelated problems simultaneously. 'To give the Rhodesian negotiations the calm and concentrated attention which they deserved against

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181880, Le Quesne to Watson, 21 October 1965.

²³⁸ Quoted in Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, p. 377.

such a tempestuous background was beyond the powers of any except the superhuman.’²³⁹ It is right to acknowledge the multiple difficulties that Wilson faced from his very first moments in office, and indeed Wilson drew attention to these in his memoirs.²⁴⁰ However, it is important not to overstate the problems that were not of Wilson’s making to the extent that they obscure the difficulties that he created for himself. During the 1964 general election Wilson need not have entered into an explicit commitment to bring about African majority rule in Rhodesia, especially as this was not even an issue in that election.²⁴¹ This commitment was at variance with his Party’s cautious approach to the Rhodesian problem in 1964, and it complicated the dialogue with the Rhodesian Government once Labour was in power. The Labour Government’s initial response to the possibility of a UDI was robust and effective, but the deterrent effect of Labour’s early posture wore off over the next few months because the Rhodesian Government was able to determine how it could circumvent the likely economic consequences of a UDI. The fact that the Labour Government was able to lock the Rhodesian Government into four rounds of substantive negotiations during 1965, and to stave off a UDI for so many months, was an achievement in itself. However, it made little sense to expend so much effort seeking a negotiated solution; it would have been more realistic to try to maintain the *status quo*. As Ben Pimlott has commented: ‘The most puzzling aspect is that the Rhodesian Government bothered to declare UDI at all. It puzzled Wilson at the time. At best illegal independence was bound to be risky and lonely, at worst disastrous. A rational course would have been to retain the stable limbo

²³⁹ Philip Ziegler, *Wilson: The Authorised Life of Lord Wilson of Rievaulx* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 218.

²⁴⁰ Wilson, *The Labour Government*, pp. 2-3.

²⁴¹ D. Butler and A. King, *The British General Election of 1964* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1965), p. 121. Cited in Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, p. 29.

of minority rule under the technical suzerainty of the British Crown.²⁴² This might have been achieved if the British Government had been prepared to engage the key concern of the Rhodesian Government – economic uncertainty – through a massive programme of aid and technical assistance. Instead, the British Government created economic uncertainty of its own with its preparations to implement economic sanctions against Rhodesia in the event of a UDI. The contingency planning operation suffered from multiple weaknesses – a complicated decision structure, ministerial procrastination, and bureaucratic conflict – which adversely affected the preparations to deal with a UDI. To return to the point raised by Ziegler, it *was* all but impossible for Wilson and the Labour Government to grapple effectively with the Rhodesian Crisis when there were so many other problems to deal with at home and abroad. Yet there were alternative policies to which the Government might have given greater consideration, especially the use of force, which is discussed in the next chapter.

²⁴² Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, p. 372.

Chapter Two

Alternatives: The United Nations, and the Use of Force

Introduction

The Labour Government's Rhodesia policy – negotiating to prevent a UDI and simultaneously preparing to deal with it when it came – was not the only viable course of action that the Government could have pursued. There were alternatives, which could either have rid Britain of responsibility for Rhodesia, or produced a direct solution that negated the intransigence of the extremist Europeans and African nationalists in Rhodesia. In other words, the Government could either have handed over the problem to the United Nations, or used force to impose a settlement. The fact that these options were dismissed with little discussion requires some explanation. The Government's reluctance to hand over the problem to the United Nations is worth examining, because it saddled Britain with primary responsibility for Rhodesia until it obtained its legal independence as Zimbabwe in 1980. This chapter will argue that the most significant reason why the British Government sought to maintain control of the Rhodesian problem at the United Nations is that it was desperate to avoid creating a precedent for UN sanctions against South Africa, which would be highly damaging to the British economy. Another key issue at the time, which has remained controversial ever since, is whether the Wilson Government could, or should, have used force against Ian Smith's regime in order to prevent UDI or, after it had occurred, to compel Rhodesia to walk a legal path to independence. Michael Stewart, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (1965-1966) wrote in his memoirs that military intervention would have been too risky: 'All the evidence before us was to the effect that [Rhodesia's] forces were well-armed and well-trained; and that they would fight. This would not be a colonial expedition but a medium-sized war of

uncertain duration.’¹ On the other hand, James Callaghan, Chancellor of the Exchequer (1964-1967), recognised in retrospect that a more coercive strategy might have yielded beneficial results: ‘I do not disguise my regret nor my belief that more forceful action by us at the time might have saved Britain from many uncomfortable moments in later years.’² This chapter demonstrates that the British Government rejected the option of using force because it was engaged in a desperate struggle to limit its military liabilities for economic reasons. Further, the Government was profoundly averse to taking any action that might have jeopardised its parliamentary majority or its prospects of winning another general election. These were the chief concerns guiding the Government’s calculations, but publicly it was prudent to argue that the use of force was neither militarily feasible, nor desirable because of popular sympathy for Rhodesian ‘kith and kin’. However, it will be argued below that even though the circumstances were not particularly favourable to military intervention, the ‘more forceful action’ advocated by Callaghan was practicable and likely to have succeeded.

¹ Michael Stewart, *Life and Labour* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1980), p. 169. Stewart’s emphatic rejection of the possibility that military force might have been used is actually at variance with his actions in October 1965, when on his own initiative he discussed military options with U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Australian representatives at the United Nations. National Archives of Australia [hereafter NAA]: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 5, James Plimsoll, Australian Mission to United Nations [hereafter AMUN], New York, to Department of External Affairs [hereafter DEA], Canberra, Cable No. UN1468, 9 October 1965.

² James Callaghan, *Time and Chance* (London: Collins, 1987), p. 145.

The UN option

In November 1964, a British Cabinet sub-committee considered a list of proposals for the solution of the Rhodesian problem, which Arthur Bottomley presented ‘roughly in ascending order of acceptability to Mr Smith’:³

1. Hand over to the UN, admitting that the UK has no solution to the problem (similar to Palestine).
2. Suspend the Rhodesian Constitution and impose direct rule by force.
3. Amend the current Constitution to enfranchise the Africans.
4. Summon an immediate Constitutional conference in London or Salisbury.
5. Allow independence on the basis of the 1961 Constitution, provided that the Africans are enfranchised beforehand.
6. Persuade Smith to accept a Commonwealth Commission to try to devise a solution to the problem.
7. [Her Majesty’s Government] to devise a new Constitution with a bicameral legislature, the second chamber of which would contain an African majority.
8. Ask Smith to provide greater evidence of Rhodesian support for independence on the basis of the 1961 Constitution.

³ The National Archives [hereafter TNA]: Public Records Office, Kew [hereafter PRO], CAB 130/206, MISC 4/5, ‘Cabinet: Southern Rhodesia. Policy and Tactics’, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 20 November 1964. Wilson chaired the meeting, attended by six Cabinet ministers: Bottomley, Castle, Gardiner, Greenwood, Healey, and Soskice.

9. Suggest a national meeting similar to the ‘National Convention’ held under the governorship of Sir J. Kennedy in 1960.
10. Suggest a political moratorium on the independence issue, with the UK or Commonwealth intervening to dissuade the African Nationalists from unconstitutional action.
11. Persuade Smith to make a concession to the African Nationalists by incorporating a few of them into his Government.
12. Propose that the convention of non-intervention in Rhodesian affairs by the British Parliament be formalised, but with [Her Majesty’s Government] retaining responsibility for external affairs.
13. Grant immediate independence with safeguards against repeal of the entrenched clauses of the Constitution.
14. Grant unconditional independence.

As the previous chapter demonstrated, the Labour Government discussed many of the ‘middle’ options with the Rhodesian Government during the course of 1965, and even went so far as to explore the possibility of granting independence with safeguards against repeal of the entrenched clauses of the 1961 Constitution. Yet despite these concessions – which represented a reversal of its previous commitment to grant independence only on the basis of majority rule – the Labour Government was unable to agree a formula for Rhodesian independence. When Wilson met Smith in January 1965 and learned that the Rhodesian Front was examining ways to prolong European rule in Rhodesia by up to 70 years, it would not have been unreasonable for Wilson to concede that the British Government had no solution to the problem and was therefore going to hand the matter over to the United Nations. Officials in the Foreign Office West and Central Africa

Department later suggested: ‘This is a threat to which precisely the most reactionary and stubborn Rhodesians would be likely to be most susceptible.’⁴ It was argued that handing over the problem to the United Nations would have several advantages: it would accept the facts of the situation (namely that the British Government had no ability to control the situation in Rhodesia); it would obviate the need for a general trade embargo; and it would demonstrate that British policy was not motivated by favouritism towards the white minority in Rhodesia.⁵ It also became apparent shortly before UDI that a majority of the British public (some 63 per cent) was in favour of handing responsibility for Rhodesia to the United Nations.⁶

Why, then, did Wilson not threaten to turn the matter over to the United Nations, and why did he press on with apparently hopeless negotiations rather than rid the British Government of the problem? Several reasons may be suggested. First, it is questionable whether the Rhodesian Government would have paused, reconsidered its position, and adopted a more reasonable posture in its negotiations with Britain. There is evidence that the Rhodesian Government would probably have justified a UDI on the basis that Britain intended to absolve itself of responsibility, and was no longer capable of defending Rhodesia against external interference in its constitutional affairs.⁷ Second, until his

⁴ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181879, West and Central Africa Department [hereafter WCAD] brief for Secretary of State’s attendance at OPD (65) 40th Meeting, 22 September 1965, para. 8.

⁵ *Ibid.*, para 10.

⁶ *National Opinion Poll Bulletin, Special Supplement 1, Rhodesia* (October 1965). Cited by E. Silver, ‘Mr Wilson, the Public and Rhodesia’, *Venture*, Vol. 18 (February 1966), p. 4.

⁷ On 27 October 1964, Smith told the Rhodesian Legislative Assembly that a UDI would become imperative if Britain broke the convention of non-interference in Rhodesia’s domestic affairs, or ceased to support Rhodesia at the United Nations. J. R. T. Wood, ‘*So far and no further!*’ *Rhodesia’s bid for*

desperate mission to Rhodesia in October 1965, Wilson clearly did not feel that he had fully explored the possibility of a negotiated settlement. A related point is that Wilson recognised that his Government would have been subjected to a great deal of domestic and international criticism if it had handed responsibility for Rhodesia to the United Nations prematurely. Following a meeting with Wilson in October 1965, the editor of the *Guardian* wrote in his private record: ‘Wilson said he thought Heath was looking for a way in which to hit the British Government – to say that they had mishandled the negotiations with Smith’, but Heath’s options were narrow because he could not condemn the Government for handing the matter over to the United Nations, or accuse it of a lack of clarity in its dealings with Smith.⁸ Third, in early 1965 British contingency planning was only in its infancy, especially in relation to the potential ramifications of economic warfare between Rhodesia and Zambia. Even if the Labour Government no longer claimed primary responsibility for Rhodesia and managed to avoid a general trade embargo, it would still have wished to support Zambia, and would therefore have been plunged into a situation with which it was ill prepared to cope. The Foreign Office highlighted the necessity of protecting Zambian copper production as a key reason why the British Government should seek to maintain formal responsibility for Rhodesia at the

independence during the retreat from empire 1959-1965 (Victoria, BC: Trafford, 2005), p. 247. Similarly, Oliver Bennett told the Canadians that if Britain failed to protect Rhodesia at the United Nations it would provoke a UDI. National Archives of Canada, Ottawa [hereafter NAC]: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, ‘Visit to Ottawa of Mr. O. B. Bennett, Rhodesian Minister in Washington, 18 January 1965’, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Canadian Trade Commission, Salisbury, Cable No. ME1, 26 January 1965.

⁸ British Library of Political and Economic Science [hereafter BLPES]: Papers of Alastair Hetherington [hereafter Hetherington Papers], Hetherington/10/3, ‘Note of a Meeting with the Prime Minister’, 11 October 1965, Item 2, ‘Rhodesia – Heath’.

United Nations in the event of a UDI.⁹ Two further reasons must also be considered: Wilson's personal fear that the United Nations might authorise the use of force, which could create a general conflagration in southern Africa that the Communists would exploit to their advantage; and the British Government's concern that an admission of UN competence to deal with the situation in Rhodesia would embolden the Afro-Asian bloc to press for UN action against South Africa, which would gravely prejudice Britain's economic interests (South Africa was Britain's fourth largest export market, worth £300 million annually).¹⁰ Of all these reasons, the last was by far the most significant.

In his memoirs Wilson wrote that at the United Nations the Soviet bloc was 'busy in seeking to win clients among African countries', and recalled that after UDI he was troubled 'when two Zambian ministers were despatched to Moscow to discuss copper sales.'¹¹ One month before UDI Wilson also privately expressed to the editor of the *Guardian* his fears about Soviet intentions in central Africa.¹² During his negotiations with Smith, Wilson warned that regardless of Rhodesian feelings about the United Nations they ought to recognise that Britain might lose control of the issue there, and in such circumstances the use of force by the United Nations could not be ruled out.¹³

⁹ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/22, OPD (65) 132, Annex II, 'Immediate Action in the UN: Note by the Foreign Office', 21 September 1965, para. 3 (iii).

¹⁰ See John W. Young, 'The Wilson government and the debate over arms to South Africa', *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (1998), pp. 62-86.

¹¹ Harold Wilson, *The Labour Government 1964-1970* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, and Michael Joseph), pp. 181 and 183.

¹² BLPES: Hetherington Papers, Hetherington/10/3, 'Note of a Meeting with the Prime Minister', 11 October 1965, Item 4, 'Rhodesia – Military Action'.

¹³ 'Record of a Meeting held at 10 Downing Street', 8 October 1965, Cmnd. 2807, p. 83.

Referring to the Congo, Wilson said that ‘at least the United Nations had been able to prevent the country from becoming a cockpit for the major Powers’, but wondered whether this would be true in Rhodesia in the event of a UDI. Wilson observed that ‘a great struggle was in progress between the Soviet Union and China for influence in Africa. Both these countries would be under strong temptation to intervene in Rhodesia with incalculable consequences.’ Wilson therefore saw a danger, if not the probability, of ‘terrible conflict and bloodshed.’¹⁴ Yet this cannot be taken at face value because Wilson was attempting to persuade Smith to adopt a more reasonable position in order to reach some sort of compromise agreement. On the same day that he warned Smith of the dire consequences of Communist involvement in the Rhodesian Crisis, Wilson advised his Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, that it was not thought the Soviet Union would wish to attempt to intervene in Rhodesia except possibly in support of a UN initiative. Even in those circumstances it was doubtful that the Soviet Union would wish to become involved militarily, as the logistical difficulties would be too great. For this reason, Wilson advised, the Soviet Union and China preferred to restrict their assistance to the training of subversive forces.¹⁵ It is therefore clear that Wilson deliberately exaggerated the danger

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181893, Wilson to Stewart (in Washington), Cable No. 7870, 8 October 1965. Whilst Stewart was at the UN he sought an assessment of what might happen if, in the worst analysis, there was a UDI followed by a UN General Assembly or Security Council Resolution providing for direct action against the Rhodesian Government. TNA: PRO, FO 371/181893, Stewart to Wilson, New York Cable No. 2383, 7 October 1965. Wilson’s reply was based on the advice of the Joint Intelligence Committee, contained in JIC (65) 69, 1 October 1965.

of intervention in Rhodesia by a ‘Red Army in blue berets’.¹⁶ He did this first, in order to apply pressure on Smith,¹⁷ and second, to justify keeping the issue out of the hands of the United Nations for as long as possible. As the following discussion demonstrates, the real reason why the British Government feared UN involvement in the Rhodesian Crisis is that it could have created a precedent for UN action against South Africa, which would have had far graver consequences than UN action against Rhodesia.

In May 1965 the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee (DOPC) determined that in the event of a UDI the British Government should take the initiative in bringing the Rhodesian Crisis before the United Nations.¹⁸ Ministers gave no further consideration to this for some months, but as the likelihood of a UDI increased, Foreign Office officials became increasingly worried about the potential linkage at the United Nations between the Rhodesian Crisis and apartheid in South Africa. In September 1965, the West and Central Africa Department sought advice about whether the imposition of economic sanctions by the British Government against Rhodesia would constitute a ‘damaging precedent’ that could be used against the British Government in the United Nations by those who advocated the imposition of sanctions against South Africa in the context of

¹⁶ Wilson used the phrase in the House of Commons on 12 November 1965. Cited in J. D. B. Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of Expansion and Attrition, 1953-1969* (London: Oxford University Press for The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1974), p. 211.

¹⁷ This did not impress Smith, who was convinced that the Rhodesian Government was a bastion against the spread of Communism in southern Africa. For a brief discussion of Smith’s anti-Communism and how this conditioned his attitude towards the Commonwealth see below, Ch. 5, pp. 268-69.

¹⁸ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, Minutes of OPD (65) 24th Meeting, 5 May 1965, para. 6.

apartheid.¹⁹ Legal advice suggested that it depended on whether the issue was brought before the Security Council in Chapter VI or Chapter VII terms. If it became a Chapter VII matter then it would establish a precedent that could be used against the British Government in the context of South Africa.²⁰ Foreign Office officials therefore advised ministers that Britain could not bring the situation before the Security Council under Chapter VII because the British Government would then have to admit that the internal situation in the territory of a member state, which had international repercussions, could constitute a threat to the peace. They pointed out that this would be contrary to the line that the British Government had consistently adopted in relation to apartheid in South Africa, and warned that if the UN extended economic sanctions to cover South Africa it could have ‘exceedingly damaging’ consequences for Britain.²¹ Even if the British Government took the matter before the UN of its own volition – whether or not it required action by other member states – the British Government would have conceded that the UN had some competence in the matter. It would therefore be difficult to argue that the British Government retained ‘sole responsibility in any subsequent constitutional negotiations.’²² The fact that the Foreign Office highlighted these concerns over a range of other considerations associated with the UN dimension of the Rhodesian Crisis clearly explains why the British Government did not consider a solution by handing the matter over to the United Nations. Yet this was not the only alternative that the British

¹⁹ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181879, C. M. Le Quesne, WCAD, to Joyce Gutteridge, Legal Department, 15 September 1965.

²⁰ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181879, Joyce Gutteridge, Legal Department, to C. M. Le Quesne, WCAD, 17 September 1965.

²¹ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/22, OPD (65) 132, Annex II, ‘Immediate Action in the UN: Note by the Foreign Office’, 21 September 1965, para. 2.

²² *Ibid.*, para. 3 (ii).

Government could have considered. The second option on Bottomley's list was the use of force, but this was given very short shrift across all Government departments.

Killing kith and kin: the viability of British military intervention in Rhodesia

In the previous chapter it was noted that very soon after the Labour Government was elected a small group of ministers agreed that 'there could be no question of military intervention in Rhodesia unless we were asked to intervene by the Governor and could rely on the co-operation of the Rhodesian regular forces and on the availability of Salisbury airfield as a point of entry.'²³ The British Government was advised that such conditions were unlikely, which meant that the use of force against Rhodesia in the event of a UDI had effectively been ruled out within two weeks of the Labour Government taking office. This partly reflected the continuity in advice from the Chiefs of Staff, who had concluded three years earlier that military intervention, in what was then the Central African Federation, was not viable in the face of opposition from Federal forces.²⁴ In

²³ This agreement reflected the advice of the Secretary of State for Defence. TNA: PRO, CAB 130/206, MISC 4/2 'UDI: Defence Implications', 27 October 1964. This view was repeated like a mantra throughout meetings of the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee during 1965. TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, *passim*.

²⁴ The Prime Minister of the Central African Federation, Sir Roy Welensky, was at this stage struggling to preserve the Federation by pressuring London not to concede to the demands of African nationalists for Northern Rhodesian independence. Welensky hinted that if independence were conceded, it would result in a coup by Federal forces and a UDI by the Federation. The Joint Planning Staff advised in June 1961 that 'We see no military solution of the dispute between Sir Roy Welensky and H[er] M[ajesty's] Government short of war with the Federation.' TNA: PRO, DEFE 32/17, JP (61) Note 19, para. 12, 14 June 1961. This advice was based on an earlier report, JP (61) 23 (Final), 'Outline Plan for Deployment in Northern Rhodesia' (Operation Fume), 2 March 1961. These planning papers were withdrawn, which is an indication of the sensitivity of the issue. For a discussion of the antecedents of British military planning see

January 1962, officials in the Ministry of Defence raised a query concerning British plans for meeting internal security problems in Northern Rhodesia. The Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff, Major-General D. S. S. O'Connor, advised officials that there was no plan for that contingency. There was only one plan, Operation Mattock, which had been designed to provide assistance to the Federation in the event of external aggression.²⁵ In the final paragraph of his paper O'Connor warned:

If there is any thought of operations in Northern Rhodesia in the face of active opposition from the Federal Forces, you need no reminder of the results of our anguished examinations last February when it became clear that we would have to resort to war if H[er] M[ajesty's] G[overnment]'s decisions were to be enforced.²⁶

The Chief of the Defence Staff, Lord Mountbatten, also echoed these warnings, and the Conservative Government was left in no doubt that British military intervention depended upon Federal co-operation and there was no workable plan in the event of opposition from Federal forces.²⁷ This advice informed the position of the Macmillan Government when the Americans asked what the British response would be in the event of a UDI by Southern Rhodesia. When Adlai Stevenson visited London in March 1963, the former

also Philip Murphy, "An intricate and distasteful subject": British planning for the use of force against the European settlers of Central Africa, 1952-1965', *English Historical Review* (forthcoming, 2006).

²⁵ TNA: PRO, DEFE 25/22 COS (61) 476 [n.d.]

²⁶ TNA: PRO, DEFE 25/22, Major-General D. S. S. O'Connor to Mr C. W. Wright, MOD Division 5, 9 February 1962.

²⁷ TNA: PRO, DEFE 25/22, Lord Mountbatten to Harold Watkinson, 6 February 1962. The Secretary of State for War reported Mountbatten's comments to the Cabinet on 26 February 1962.

Colonial Secretary, Iain Macleod, told him that British military intervention was ‘inconceivable’ due to the strength of the armed forces at the disposal of the Federation.²⁸ As noted below, Conservative and Labour politicians advanced this argument against British military intervention consistently before and after UDI.

Shortly before the Labour Government was elected, the Defence Planning Staff (DPS) prepared a report ‘To set out an outline plan for, and to examine the implications of, the introduction of British forces into Southern Rhodesia at the request of the Governor in circumstances when the Southern Rhodesian Government declared independence.’²⁹ The DPS assumed that the Governor would be assured of the support of the Rhodesian Chiefs of Staff and the bulk of the armed forces, that the loyalty of the Territorial Force and the Police could not be guaranteed, and that inter-racial disorder might occur.³⁰ It was argued in the report that a military operation in these circumstances ‘would place a severe strain on the loyalties and morale of British troops’ and warned that intervention in less favourable circumstances would be impracticable.³¹ The report concluded that military intervention was likely to lead to action against both whites and blacks, which might have repercussions in other African and Asian countries; it would place a burden on the armed forces, which were already overstretched; and it would represent a *volte face* from recent policy statements which could lead to severe international criticism, despite the legality of

²⁸ TNA: PRO, FO 1109/535, I. Macleod to R. A. Butler, 1 April 1963. Cited in L. J. Butler, ‘Britain, the United States, and the Demise of the Central African Federation, 1959-63’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (September 2000), p. 145.

²⁹ TNA: PRO DEFE 32/17, DP 83/64 (Final) ‘Operations in Central Africa’, para. 4, 19 June 1964.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 5.

³¹ *Ibid.*, paras. 7 and 34.

the intervention.³² Given this excessively pessimistic advice, it is perhaps not surprising that the Labour Government ruled out the use of force at such an early stage after taking office. Whether this advice was infallible is another matter entirely.

The practicalities of British military intervention

Douglas Anglin has observed that debate about the feasibility of British military intervention revolved around five factors: availability of sufficient forces; logistical support; the likely extent of Rhodesian resistance; the danger of South African intervention; and the willingness of British soldiers to fight against their 'kith and kin'.³³ These various considerations can be assessed with reference to a variety of evidence that has only become available during the last few years.

(i) Availability of forces

Estimates of the size of the force required occupy Rhodesia varied considerably. A limited deployment in a *coup de main* operation would have required a single battalion of paratroops, which could have been dropped into Rhodesia to bolster the authority of the Governor in Salisbury. However, as Robert Good has pointed out, this type of scenario ignored a fundamental consideration: 'No responsible commander would have embarked upon such a risky venture without a substantial reserve force at the ready.'³⁴ Certainly,

³² Ibid., para. 35.

³³ Douglas G. Anglin, 'Britain and the Use of Force in Rhodesia', in Michael G. Fry (ed.), *Freedom and Change: essays in honour of Lester B. Pearson* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), pp. 68-69.

³⁴ Robert C. Good, *UDI: The International Politics of the Rhodesian Rebellion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 58. Sir Oliver Wright, Private Secretary to Harold Wilson, has commented: 'I

there is no evidence in surviving British documents that such an operation was given any consideration by the DPS, whose plans were always formulated on the assumption that at least one Brigade Group would be required. Operation Mattock, which had been conceived to defend Rhodesia against external aggression, provided for the insertion of one Brigade Group with artillery on call and an armoured car squadron, such forces to be drawn from any or all of Middle East Command, Royal Marine Commandos overseas, and the UK Strategic Reserve.³⁵ Operation Fume, which was designed to deal with a Congo-type situation in Northern Rhodesia, required large air, naval and military forces of up to three Brigade Groups including 3 Commando Brigade (consisting of 42 Royal Marine Commando and 45 Royal Marine Commando, from Aden; and 40 Royal Marine Commando, from Malta) 3 Parachute Battalion Group, 51 Infantry Brigade Headquarters and an armoured car squadron.³⁶ Similarly, when the DPS prepared its 1964 plans it estimated force requirements at one Brigade Group at light scales, with a further Brigade Group at readiness and an armoured car squadron.³⁷ It has also been suggested that if serious resistance were encountered (which was discounted in British plans because military intervention was ruled out altogether in such circumstances) Britain might have

simply don't believe that any politician would take the responsibility, or any Chief of Defence Staff would fail to put in a bid for anything less than overwhelming force.' Wright in 'Rhodesian UDI', Institute of Contemporary British History [hereafter cited as ICBH] Witness Seminar, 6 September 2000, Session Two Transcript, p. 55. <http://www.icbh.ac.uk/icbh/witness/rhodesia>

³⁵ TNA: PRO, DEFE 25/22, COS (61) 476 [n.d.]

³⁶ TNA: PRO, DEFE 32/17, JP (61) 23 (Final), 'Outline Plan for Deployment in Northern Rhodesia' (Operation Fume), 2 March 1961. Planned naval forces included HMS *Victorious*, HMS *Hermes*, HMS *Bulwark* and HMS *Dieppe*. Three squadrons of Canberra bombers and two squadrons of Hunter fighters would have provided RAF strike capabilities.

³⁷ TNA: PRO, DEFE 32/17, DP 83/64 (Final), 'Operations in Central Africa', para. 17, 19 June 1964.

needed to deploy up to two divisions.³⁸ Dean Rusk, with more than a nod to the concept of overwhelming force, suggested between six and eight divisions might be required.³⁹

Clearly, then, substantial numbers of troops would have been required if the British decided to intervene in Rhodesia with any degree of assurance that they could deal with all eventualities. Douglas Anglin acknowledged: 'The larger the British expeditionary force, the less resistance there would likely have been, the shorter the campaign, the fewer the casualties, and the less explosive the domestic political repercussions.'⁴⁰ However, the problem was that by 1964 Britain's armed forces were seriously stretched by multiple commitments around the world. In particular, by the time that Harold Wilson entered office, *Konfrontasi* (the protection of Malaysia against Indonesian subversion) was absorbing a substantial proportion of Britain's military resources, including over 50,000 troops and more than a third of the Royal Navy's surface fleet.⁴¹ This meant that many of the units that had been earmarked in earlier plans for deployment to Rhodesia were no longer available. Robert Good suggested that any shortage of troops might have been overcome by detaching some units from the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR). There was a precedent for this, as the French had 'borrowed' some of their NATO forces for their operations in Algeria.⁴² In fact, British commanders did not consider BAOR units to be suitable for operations in Rhodesia, but the DPS had suggested that any

³⁸ Anglin, 'Britain and the Use of Force in Rhodesia', p. 69; Good, *UDI*, p. 58.

³⁹ NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 5, Plimsoll, AMUN, New York, to DEA, Canberra, Cable No. UN1468, 9 October 1965.

⁴⁰ Anglin, 'Britain and the Use of Force in Rhodesia', p. 69.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*; and Eric J. Grove, *Vanguard to Trident: British Naval Policy Since World War Two* (London: Bodley Head, 1987), pp. 265-67.

⁴² Good, *UDI*, p. 59.

shortage of troops might be met by using the UK Strategic Reserve, which was maintained to meet emergency situations.⁴³ It can therefore be argued that lack of adequate forces was not a convincing reason for non-intervention in Rhodesia.

(ii) Logistical Support

The logistical situation was considered to be an insurmountable obstacle to military intervention in Rhodesia. Denis Healey observed that Aden was the nearest British base and that was as far away from Rhodesia as Cairo is from London.⁴⁴ Similarly, Colonel George Wigg, Harold Wilson's self-styled security expert, advised the Prime Minister: 'It is obvious when looking at the land locked nature of Southern Rhodesia and geographical dispersal of its airfields that military intervention by our Armed Forces is out of the question.'⁴⁵ Certainly, the initial deployment of British forces would have been difficult because the numbers of troops required was relatively large, lines of communication were very long and Rhodesia enjoyed a favourable strategic location, with South Africa and the Portuguese colony of Mozambique protecting its southern and eastern flanks. The only land route into Rhodesia was through Zambia, and although President Kaunda was very willing to allow British forces to use Zambian facilities, there were some complicating factors involved in establishing a large intervention force there.

⁴³ TNA: PRO, DEFE 32/17, DP 83/64 (Final), 'Operations in Central Africa', para. 20, 19 June 1964.

⁴⁴ Denis Healey, *The Time of My Life* (London: Michael Joseph, 1989), p. 331.

⁴⁵ BLPES: Papers of George Edward Cecil Wigg [hereafter Wigg Papers], WIGG 4/68, 'Military Situation - Southern Rhodesia', 4 November 1965.

To begin with, the movement of British troops to Zambia and their subsequent supply would have absorbed the total capacity of RAF Transport Command. Its 56 Argosy aircraft were capable of carrying around 70 men or 15 tons of stores each, and to move a single Brigade Group to Lusaka via a staging post in Dar Es Salaam would have taken between a week and ten days.⁴⁶ If a larger British force was required it would have been necessary to supplement the transport capacity of the RAF by commandeering civilian aircraft, or requesting assistance from the United States Government, which would probably have been forthcoming.⁴⁷ American help would certainly have been desirable given the complications that would have been inherent in maintaining British forces in southern Africa. When the DPS drew up its plans for Operation Mattock, it emphasized that British forces would be reliant upon the co-operation of the Federation for the supply of engineer plant and stores; fresh rations; petrol, oil and lubricants; a limited number of civilian vehicles; accommodation; use of railways; and limited aircraft handling facilities and servicing systems. It suggested that protracted operations would require a surface line of communication and it would therefore be necessary to arrange this with either the

⁴⁶ Neville Brown, 'Military Sanctions Against Rhodesia', *Venture*, Vol. 17, No. 12 (January 1966), p. 12; William Gutteridge, 'Rhodesia: the use of military force', *The World Today*, Vol. 21 (December 1965), p. 499; and Good, *UDI*, p. 59.

⁴⁷ Thomas Mann, the U.S. Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs, advised President Johnson that any British request for American troops in Rhodesia should be refused but a request for an airlift to move and support British troops should be treated sympathetically. Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Texas [hereafter LBJL]: White House Confidential File, Mann to the President, 22 December 1965. The Joint Chiefs had by this time ordered a military study of Rhodesian military capabilities and an estimate of whether the United States could meet a British request for up to three squadrons of transport aircraft. LBJL: National Security File [hereafter NSF], Rhodesia Country File, Box 97, 'Cables, 12/63-1/66', JCS to U.S. C-in-C Middle East, Cable No. 071558z, 7 December 1965. This document was declassified in September 2005 pursuant to a Mandatory Review request.

South African or Portuguese authorities. The plan relied on over-flying Tanzania, or Mozambique, in which case it would be necessary to obtain authorisation from the relevant authorities.⁴⁸ However, if British forces had been deployed to prevent or end a UDI they could not have expected a great deal of co-operation, in which case military intervention would have been much more difficult. In 1961 British planners estimated the supply requirements for a force consisting of three brigades at between 60 and 90 tons per day,⁴⁹ and in the event of a UDI this would have to be airlifted into Zambia, which would have been no small undertaking. A further logistical problem that would have been involved in British operations out of Zambia concerned the movement of troops into Rhodesia. The Zambezi formed a natural barrier and it was only bridged at three points. This meant that British offensive operations would have been dependent upon helicopters, but these were in short supply because of British operations in Malaysia.⁵⁰

The logistical problem would also have been exacerbated by the need to maintain the Zambian economy against Rhodesian retaliatory action.⁵¹ A major concern for the British and Americans was the security of the Kariba dam and power station, which supplied Zambia with the electricity that was essential to keep its copper mines functioning.⁵²

⁴⁸ TNA: PRO, DEFE 25/22, COS (61) 476 [n.d.]

⁴⁹ TNA: PRO, DEFE 32/17, 'Internal Security Reinforcement of Northern Rhodesia', para. 11, 9 February 1961.

⁵⁰ Brown, 'Military Sanctions Against Rhodesia', p. 12; and Good, *UDI*, p. 59.

⁵¹ This problem was discussed at both the official and political levels in London and Washington from late 1964 throughout 1965, and created considerable strains in Anglo-American relations. See below, Ch. 6, pp. 316 ff.

⁵² A few weeks after UDI the U.S. Consul General in Salisbury warned that Kariba remained the 'Most immediate Sword of Damocles' despite the fact that Ian Smith had rejected press speculation that

However, Kariba lay on the Rhodesian side of the Zambesi and when the DPS considered the possibility of a British deployment to seize control of the installation they recognized a large number of factors inhibited such an operation, not least their lack of confidence that surprise could be maintained.⁵³ Harold Wilson was prepared to deploy British troops along the north bank of the Zambesi in a purely defensive capacity, but the proposal foundered when Kenneth Kaunda insisted that they should seize control of Kariba.⁵⁴ Next, Wilson suggested that a Commonwealth force might be used to protect Kariba, but this generated no enthusiasm in Australia.⁵⁵ In the event Kariba remained safe, probably because the Rhodesians recognized that any action taken against the installation might have provoked British military intervention.⁵⁶ However, once economic sanctions against Rhodesia escalated the British and American Governments were compelled to mount a massive airlift to maintain the Zambian economy, which would otherwise have been crippled by Rhodesian economic retaliation.⁵⁷

Rhodesian forces might take action against the installation. LBJL: NSF, Rhodesia Country File, Box 97, 'Cables, 12/63-1/66', McClelland to State Department, Cable No. 480, 4 December 1965.

⁵³ TNA: PRO, DEFE 32/17, DP 17/65 (Final), 'The Kariba Dam. Note by the Directors of Defence Plans', 22 February 1965. These contingency plans were drawn up following State Department enquiries in early February. TNA: PRO, DO 183/619, N. C. C. Trench, British Embassy, Washington, to Mr. C. M. LeQuesne, WCAD, Foreign Office, 5 February 1965; and John Wilson, WCAD, to Trench, 12 February 1965.

⁵⁴ Anglin, 'Britain and the Use of Force in Rhodesia', p. 63; Wilson, *The Labour Government*, p. 182.

⁵⁵ NAA: A1838, 190/11/1, Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee Decision No. 1445 (FAD), 7 December 1965; and Sir Robert Menzies to Harold Wilson, 9 December 1965.

⁵⁶ It has been suggested that British intelligence conveyed a warning to the Rhodesian Government that any Rhodesian action would be met by unspecified reprisals. See D. Leigh, *The Wilson Plot: The Intelligence Services and the Discrediting of a Prime Minister* (London: Heinemann, 1988), p. 106.

⁵⁷ See below, Ch. 6, p. 326, n. 48.

It may be argued that the complexities of the logistical situation militated against British military intervention but they were not insurmountable (as the Anglo-American airlift proved). Indeed, the logistical obstacles *should not* have been insurmountable, as the Labour Party's Commonwealth Officer, George Cunningham, pointed out: 'If we do not have the power [to use troops] we have no right to have colonies in our charge and our military planners deserve hanging for spending \$2,000 million a year without being able to compel a population the size of that of Harrow to stick to the law.'⁵⁸

(iii) The likely extent of Rhodesian resistance

In 1965 there were all sorts of dire predictions about the likely scale of the fighting that would result from British military intervention in Rhodesia. Shortly before UDI, for example, Harold Wilson told President Kaunda that Britain could not send troops into Rhodesia because the Rhodesians would 'resist bitterly any British forces and would fanatically try like Hitler to defend their "standards".'⁵⁹ No doubt there was an element of hyperbole in Wilson's remarks, as he was trying to dissuade Kaunda from pressing for military intervention, but there was – and still is – a deep conviction in Britain that the Rhodesian armed forces would not have hesitated to resist British military intervention. Sir John Pestell, Controller and Secretary to the British Governor in Rhodesia at the time of UDI, was adamant on this point: 'I knew lots of army and air force ... I don't believe that when the balloon went up the Rhodesian forces would not have opposed

⁵⁸ G. Cunningham, 'Rhodesia – An Indictment', *Venture*, Vol. 17, No. 11 (December 1965), p. 3.

⁵⁹ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181881, Sir L. Monson, British Embassy, Lusaka, to Commonwealth Relations Office, Cable No. 1659, 31 October 1965.

vehemently.’⁶⁰ Yet until now there has never been any research published on the question of whether Rhodesian forces would have resisted British troops. It appears that the picture is rather more nuanced than politicians, civil servants or the military admitted at the time or since.⁶¹ Similarly, there has never been any informed assessment of whether Rhodesian forces were properly equipped to fight against Britain, which is surely a critical factor in any discussion of the viability of British military intervention.

(a) Rhodesian attitudes

The attitude of the Rhodesian Service Chiefs can be assessed on the basis of the reports of the British Defence Liaison Staff (RAF Element) in Salisbury.⁶² In his report for the period from June to August 1964, Group Captain Slade advised that members of the Rhodesian Front Party, including Ministers, had been meeting officers and airmen informally and socially to casually enquire if the Rhodesian Government could rely upon

⁶⁰ Sir John Pestell in ‘Rhodesian UDI’, ICBH Witness Seminar, 6 September 2000, Session Two Transcript, p. 56. <http://www.icbh.ac.uk/icbh/witness/rhodesia>

⁶¹ Bottomley wrote in his memoirs: ‘Smith possessed a well-trained army and police force, which were completely loyal to him.’ *Commonwealth, Comrades and Friends* (Bombay: Somaiya Publications, 1985), p. 141. Yet not everyone who examined the issue at the time was convinced of the loyalty of the Rhodesian armed forces to the Rhodesian Front. Shortly before the Labour Government was elected George Cunningham advised the National Executive Committee: ‘The loyalty of the armed forces must be in doubt and must be Mr. Smith’s biggest worry.’ National Museum of Labour History, Manchester: Commonwealth Papers, Southern Rhodesia Documents, 1963-1966, Paper No. OV/1963-64/29, 21 July 1964.

⁶² TNA: PRO, AIR 20/11189. Group Captain H. G. Slade was the RAF Liaison Officer and Air Adviser to the British High Commissioner in Salisbury from 1962 until November 1964. Group Captain G. B. Johns then succeeded Slade.

them in the event of a UDI. Slade reported that the Chief of the Air Staff in Rhodesia, Air Vice Marshal Bentley, had 'taken great exception to this being done' and had made this clear to Ian Smith 'in no uncertain terms.'⁶³ Just before the end of his tour, Slade wrote to Air Vice Marshal Sir Peter Fletcher, Assistant Chief of the Air Staff (Policy), in London, commenting on the likely reaction of the Rhodesian Chiefs of Staff in the event of a UDI: 'I have never found it difficult to state where the Armed Forces would stand. As you know I have never had any doubts whatsoever about Bentley's position or reactions; similarly my Army colleague has had no doubts about the Army.'⁶⁴ However, Slade suspected that Bentley would be removed before his official retirement in July 1965. On the following day, the General Officer Commanding Rhodesia, Major General John Anderson, was 'retired' on the grounds of age (at 51). Anderson, who was known to oppose a UDI, was reported to have said: 'I have been represented politically as being the only stumbling block. But I do not believe that this is so. I think I have the support of some members of the other services and Security Forces in my attitude.'⁶⁵

There was some questioning in the British Cabinet about the loyalty of the Rhodesian armed forces. Healey was tasked with improving intelligence on this issue, but there does not appear to be any evidence that the matter was discussed further, either in the Cabinet

⁶³ TNA: PRO, AIR 20/11189, Slade to MOD (Air Department), 31 August 1964. George Ivan Smith, the personal representative in southern Africa of UN Secretary General, U. Thant, also reported that he had heard of these Rhodesian Front enquiries. Centre for Southern African Studies, Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, York: SMI 9, Smith to Thant, 17 April 1964.

⁶⁴ TNA: PRO, AIR 20/11189, Slade to Fletcher, 23 October 1964. The Army Historical Branch, Ministry of Defence, confirms that the records of the BDLS (Army Element) have not survived (in common with many other overseas records). Mr I. Goode to author, 8 March 1999.

⁶⁵ *Rhodesia Herald*, 24 October 1964. Slade included a cutting of the front page in his letter to Fletcher.

or the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee.⁶⁶ However, it is now clear that Anderson's replacement, Major-General Rodney Putterill, held similar views to those of his predecessor.⁶⁷ Air Vice Marshal Bentley was retired slightly early in April 1965, as Group Captain Slade had predicted. Air Vice Marshal Harold Hawkins replaced Bentley, who quickly assured Slade's successor, Group Captain Johns, the relationship between the Royal Air Force and its Rhodesian counterpart would not change.⁶⁸ In his report for the period from April to August 1965, Johns commented: 'On the surface the attitude of the Rhodesian Defence Forces has not changed. They continue to be friendly and co-operative.'⁶⁹ In November 1965, Hawkins actually advised Johns that UDI was imminent and, further, 'he had told his stations that he would not issue any illegal orders i.e. orders would be confined to those necessary for the country's security.'⁷⁰ This might be

⁶⁶ TNA: PRO, CAB 130/206, Minutes of Meeting, 28 October 1964. In fact, British intelligence on Rhodesia was extremely weak; the Joint Intelligence Committee did not even task MI6 with obtaining intelligence on Rhodesia. See Stephen Dorril, *MI6. Inside the Covert World of Her Majesty's Secret Intelligence Service* (New York: Touchstone, 2002), p. 725; Leigh, *The Wilson Plot*, p. 106; and John Young, *The Labour Governments 1964-70 Volume 2: International Policy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 179.

⁶⁷ Putterill told the Chief of the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation that he would support the Governor if so requested. Ken Flower, *Serving Secretly. An Intelligence Chief on Record: Rhodesia into Zimbabwe, 1964-1981* (London: John Murray, 1987), p. 56. When Putterill retired, he joined the multi-racial Centre Party in protest against the Rhodesian Front's racial Constitution of 1969; he also opposed the regime's efforts to make Rhodesia a republic. See Elaine Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), p. 28; and Good, *UDI*, p. 57.

⁶⁸ TNA: PRO, AIR 20/11189, Johns to MOD (Air Department), 1 April 1965.

⁶⁹ TNA: PRO, AIR 20/11189, Johns to MOD (Air Department), 4 September 1965.

⁷⁰ TNA: PRO, AIR 20/11189, Johns to Commonwealth Relations Office, Emergency Cable, 9 November 1965.

considered slightly ambiguous, but Hawkins also referred to the hard-liners in the Rhodesian Front as ‘madmen’, which is a reasonable indication of his hostility to UDI.⁷¹ The attitude of the Rhodesian Service Chiefs, even after the purge of Anderson and Bentley, might therefore have helped to prevent a full-scale confrontation between British and Rhodesian forces.

Attitudes among senior Rhodesian Army officers were not sympathetic to the Rhodesian Front regime. On the morning of UDI the Governor in Salisbury, Sir Humphrey Gibbs, received a visit from four Army officers who arrived armed at Government House. They informed Gibbs that if he provided them with a warrant for the arrest of Smith as a rebel against the Queen, they would do their duty. The Governor refused, and the soldiers left. In Gibbs’ obituary Patrick Keatley commented that ‘This was the fatal moment of hesitation.’⁷² The Governor had in fact considered the possibility of resisting UDI. He consulted Ken Flower, Chief of the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO), to ascertain his views. Flower recalled in his memoirs:

Although I considered that the loyalty of the Chiefs of Staff, Putterill and Hawkins, was not in doubt and that many of their senior officers would follow their lead, I advised Gibbs that an appeal for their support would

⁷¹ Hawkins’s comment referred, in particular, to the Minister of Law and Order, Desmond Lardner-Burke, and Commissioner of Police Barfoot. Hawkins also told Flower that he was fully in support of the Governor. *Serving Secretly*, p. 56.

⁷² Patrick Keatley, Obituary of Sir Humphrey Gibbs, *Guardian Weekly*, 18 November 1990. Quoted in Alan Megahey, *Sir Humphrey Gibbs: Beleaguered Governor* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 110-11. In his autobiography Wilson’s security adviser, George Wigg, suggests that he was in favour of demanding Ian Smith’s arrest. *George Wigg* (London: Michael Joseph, 1972), p. 326.

put them in an almost impossible position, between the government that paid them and an overseas Queen to whom they owed their allegiance.⁷³

Flower also advised that the possibility of bloodshed could not be discounted because the attitude among middle and junior ranks was more belligerent, especially in the Rhodesian Light Infantry (RLI), which Flower said ‘would willingly “jump into the Makabusi (a muddy river on the outskirts of the city [Salisbury]) for Smith, even if this meant going against their seniors.’⁷⁴ Some former RLI troops have since expressed a view that they would, without question, have fought against British troops or any other invading force.⁷⁵ Victor Lee Walker, a Captain in 1RLI who at the time of UDI was seconded to the Military Intelligence Section of the CIO, has commented:

⁷³ Flower, *Serving Secretly*, p. 55. Lieutenant General Peter Walls, who commanded the RLI in 1965, has suggested to one historian that his orders were to resist any invading force. Walls said it would have been a ‘sad duty’ to fight against the British, but any reservations would have disappeared after the first casualties had been sustained. Interview with Donal Lowry, Johannesburg, 8 July 1983. Cited in Lowry, ‘Ulster resistance and loyalist rebellion in the Empire’, in Keith Jeffery (ed.), *‘An Irish Empire’? Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 213, n. 69.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Dennis Croukamp, 13 Troop, 3 Commando RLI (1965-1980) to author, 28 September 1999; Peter Eldridge, RLI Support Group (1961-1975), then 2 Rhodesian African Rifles (commissioned, 1975), to author, 23 November 2004; Leopold James Bergoff, RLI, to author, 14 and 15 April 2005. Jim Bergoff joined the RLI as a recruit in 1960, rose through the ranks to become a WO1, and was later commissioned in the Rhodesian Army Medical Corps, retiring as an acting Captain in October 1981. He commented: ‘I consider that I was a well disciplined soldier – and loved my country – I believe that many of us would have died for “Rhodesia”.’

The general feeling within the RLI, and other Rhodesian Defence organisations was one of intense loyalty to the country and its government and all members were prepared to fight for Rhodesia (this was later proved during the terrorist campaign). I was prepared to resist any intervention in our country's affairs as were all my fellow officers who were still serving in 1RLI.⁷⁶

The Rhodesian Front could also have counted on the support of the Territorial Force and reservists, who reflected the political mood of the European population in Rhodesia and were therefore likely to offer some resistance to British military intervention.⁷⁷ Yet in other units the mood was not quite so clear-cut, as one commentator pointed out:

It should not be forgotten, however, that there is a regular African battalion, whose reputation is not particularly high and whose conduct would be unpredictable in the event of a serious African rising. It has European officers but is otherwise largely a mixed Matabele and Mashona unit. In some circumstances a mutiny presumably could not be ruled out, but equally it can be assumed that the Rhodesians are alert to the possibility if it exists.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Victor Lee Walker, RLI, to author, 26 November 2004. Walker served in the Rhodesian armed forces from October 1960 to December 1981, and was badged to the RLI from 1963 until his retirement. At the time of UDI Walker was responsible for intelligence gathering on terrorist training in Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. He later went on to serve in various staff positions and finally became a Brigadier, commanding 4 Brigade at Fort Victoria (now Masvingo).

⁷⁷ Good, *UDI*, p. 57; Gutteridge, 'Rhodesia: the use of military force', p. 500.

⁷⁸ Gutteridge, 'Rhodesia: the use of military force', pp. 500-01.

The Rhodesian Front was certainly alert to the possibility, which explains why some African units were disbanded.⁷⁹ On the other hand, it has also been suggested that African troops were in fact loyal to the Rhodesian Government.⁸⁰ Beyond the Rhodesian Army, the paramilitary British South Africa Police (BSAP) also played a major role in Rhodesian security.⁸¹ There is certainly evidence of militant opinion among the substantial European element of this force. One former BSAP officer said that he would have fought against the British, even though he later went on to join the British Army, serving as an officer in the Gurkhas!⁸² Other former officers have indicated a strong belief that they were engaged in a struggle against communist insurrection.⁸³ This is perhaps not surprising when one considers that ‘A tremendous propaganda exercise was mounted by the Rhodesian Government for many months prior to UDI and this of course continued well after the event, if fact right up to the demise of Rhodesia in 1979/80.’⁸⁴ However, this propaganda exercise was necessary because the vast majority of BSAP recruits were black Africans, and the white recruits were mainly drawn from outside

⁷⁹ Good, *UDI*, p. 57.

⁸⁰ Vic Walker contended ‘Our Black troops were also behind the Rhodesian Government, in particular the 1st Battalion The Rhodesian African Rifles.’ Walker, RLI, to author, 26 November 2004.

⁸¹ The misleading name originated from the period when Cecil Rhodes’ British South Africa Company administered Rhodesia. In a survey of former BSAP officers conducted in 1999, I invited respondents to ‘consider whether you would personally have resisted a British intervention force.’ The survey yielded nineteen responses: eight confirmed that they would definitely have resisted a British force, three said that they would not, and eight were equivocal.

⁸² Derek Jewson, BSAP 6680, to author, 19 September 1999.

⁸³ Gerry de Bruin, BSAP 7228, to author, 13 September 1999; Michael Horner, BSAP 6125, to author, 16 September 1999; Dan Hughes, BSAP 6308, to author, 14 September 1999.

⁸⁴ BSAP Senior Assistant Commissioner Alan Rich, to author, 28 September 1999. Rich advised that the views of white officers should be treated with caution because of this propaganda exercise.

Rhodesia, many from the UK.⁸⁵ It therefore hardly seems likely that the entire BSAP could have been relied upon to oppose intervention by British troops. In fact, after UDI there was a wave of desertions by recruits from the UK.⁸⁶ An important element to consider in relation to the mood of the BSAP, and the Rhodesian security forces generally, is the fact that many Rhodesians felt conflicted by the oath they had sworn to the British Crown, as one former BSAP officer has commented:

You should note that I was seriously concerned that, at the time I attested into the Force, I signed an Oath of Allegiance to the Queen. At no time subsequent to the UDI did I either renounce that original Oath or sign another Oath of Allegiance. Many of my associates felt exactly the same way. It may sound old fashioned to be concerned about such matters as Oaths of Allegiance but back in 1965 Oaths had value and meant something!⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Rich to author, 28 September 1999; Ivan Smith, BSAP 7357, to author, 14 September 1999; and Gordon Johnston, BSAP 7354, to author, 21 and 28 December 1999. Smith (a Rhodesian) wrote that in his squad of about 30 only 3 were Rhodesian. Similarly, Johnston (a New Zealander) recalled that in his squad of 16 just 3 were Rhodesian. As far as propaganda was concerned, Smith and Johnston both recall that at parade on 11 November 1965 they were told that the BSAP flag was the only one to which they owed their loyalty.

⁸⁶ cf. de Bruin, to author, 13 September 1999; Johnston, to author, 28 December 1999; Smith, to author, 14 September 1999. On the other hand, it has been suggested that the British listed only 14 deserters, which was 'hardly a wave'. J. R. T. Wood to author, 18 January 2006.

⁸⁷ Adrian Staines, BSAP 6633, to author, 14 September 1999. Alan Rich also commented: 'What must be remembered [is that] we had all sworn allegiance to the Monarch and the Governor, Sir Humphrey Gibbs'. Rich, to author, 28 September 1999.

Recent evidence of attitudes in the Rhodesian security forces during 1965 suggests that although there were pockets of belligerence, there was not uniform hostility to Britain. The evidence certainly does not substantiate Denis Healey's unqualified assertion that the British Government 'had no reason to believe they would not fight us if we attempted to intervene.'⁸⁸ The Government could have found indicators that British military intervention would not have met with widespread resistance, but the Government did not carry out any detailed analysis of the situation, probably because it was generally disposed against the use of force from the beginning. Further, it may be argued that those elements of the Rhodesian security forces that may have resisted British military intervention – the Rhodesian Light Infantry, the Territorial Force, and some sections of the BSAP – lacked sufficient capabilities to do so effectively.

(b) Rhodesian capabilities

During negotiations for the dissolution of the Central African Federation the Conservative Government proposed to transfer the bulk of Federal military assets to Southern Rhodesia, which generated an outcry at the United Nations. African states were concerned that the Rhodesian Government would use its armed forces to suppress African nationalists and therefore brought forward resolutions in the Security Council and General Assembly that called upon Britain not to permit the transfer, but British representatives vetoed the resolutions.⁸⁹ As it was a Conservative Government that had

⁸⁸ Healey, *Time of My Life*, p. 332. There is some evidence that suggested the Rhodesian armed forces were at least trying to create uncertainty about their intentions. A few weeks before UDI, the MOD received a request for ammunition supplies that was well above normal requirements. TNA: PRO, CAB 130/244, OPD (O) (SR) Minutes of Meeting, Item 7, 4 October 1965.

⁸⁹ Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, pp. 15-16.

negotiated the handover of Federal forces to Southern Rhodesia, Michael Stewart no doubt felt justified in his later claim that the strength of Southern Rhodesia's armed forces was a deterrent to British military intervention under the Labour Government.⁹⁰ This was, however, disingenuous, for although Rhodesian capabilities were formidable by comparison with those of other African states, they were much less impressive when compared to those of Britain.

Rhodesian capabilities were well known to the Ministry of Defence and to George Wigg.⁹¹ The Royal Rhodesian Air Force (RRAF) in particular gave British politicians pause for thought and was never far from the minds of the DPS. The RRAF was equipped with around 70 aircraft, including Hunter and Vampire fighters, Canberra light bombers, and a squadron of Alouette helicopters. This was a potent force, but it would not have been a match for the more modern aircraft flown by the Royal Air Force, and there were in fact specific contingencies to deal with the threat from the RRAF. A few days after UDI, the Secretary of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, Air Vice Marshal J. H. Lapsley, submitted a report that concluded 12 RAF or Royal Navy fighters stationed in Zambia would be an effective deterrent or strike force against the RRAF.⁹² Shortly thereafter the RAF deployed a squadron of Javelins to Zambia together with radar defence and a detachment of the RAF Regiment. This deployment helped to ease tension with Rhodesia and provided protection for the Anglo-American airlift, but it did not satisfy Kenneth Kaunda's demands for offensive British action and by August 1966 the

⁹⁰ Stewart, *Life and Labour*, p. 169.

⁹¹ TNA: PRO, DEFE 32/17, DP 83/64 (Final), 'Operations in Central Africa', paras. 8-13, 19 June 1964; and BLPEs: Wigg Papers, WIGG 4/68, 'Southern Rhodesia – Military Situation', *passim*.

⁹² TNA: PRO, DEFE 32/17, 'An Examination of the Possible Provision of Some Air Defence for Zambia', 15 November 1965.

RAF presence was withdrawn.⁹³ These defensive arrangements demonstrate that the RAF had the means to protect Zambia, but if British forces had invaded Rhodesia it would have been necessary to neutralise the RRAF threat by bombing its bases. In late November 1965 the Chiefs of Staff submitted a report that outlined the possible uses of Vulcan, Canberra, Buccaneer, Sea Vixen and Scimitar aircraft in such an offensive role.⁹⁴ However, Harold Wilson was apparently tormented by the fact that RRAF bases at New Sarum and Thornhill were near to civilian housing, which meant that there was a good chance of inflicting civilian casualties in any bombing campaign.⁹⁵ Yet there was, perhaps, an alternative, as the head of Rhodesian intelligence recalled in his memoirs:

I remember Air Vice-Marshal Bentley, Rhodesia's Diplomatic Representative in Washington, saying during consultations in October that ... the Royal Air Force could neutralise the Rhodesian Air Force without a shot being fired in anger. One way of doing this would have been for the Royal Air Force to have their Vulcan bombers (then based in Nairobi, but which could be moved to Lusaka) keeping a permanent watch in the skies over New Sarum and Thornhill ... with the threat issued in advance that if any Rhodesian aeroplane tried to get airborne the runways and the planes on the ground would be bombed.⁹⁶

⁹³ Anglin, 'Britain and the Use of Force in Rhodesia', pp. 63-64; Wilson, *The Labour Government*, p. 182.

⁹⁴ TNA: PRO, DEFE 32/17, JP (61) 23 (Final), 'Outline Plan for Deployment in Northern Rhodesia' (Operation Fume), 2 March 1961; PRO, DEFE 32/17, DP 17/65 (Final), 'The Kariba Dam. Note by the Directors of Defence Plans', 22 February 1965; PRO, DEFE 32/17, COS 2634, 'Strike Plan for Use Against the RRAF', 27 November 1965.

⁹⁵ David Owen, *The Politics of Defence* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972), p. 115.

⁹⁶ Flower, *Serving Secretly*, p. 52.

The evidence suggests that the RRAF did not constitute an effective deterrent to British military action. It could have been destroyed (although the political problems that would have resulted from this were considered to be unacceptable) or simply suppressed by combat air patrols.

The Rhodesian Regular Army consisted of less than 2,500 men, and over 1,000 of its regular troops were Africans officered by Europeans. In his assessment of Rhodesian capabilities Wigg noted that ‘The two European teeth-arm units, 1st Battalion Rhodesian Light Infantry and Special Air Service Squadron, have deficiencies in manpower and this is also reflected in the supporting arms and services.’⁹⁷ A Territorial Force of about 6,000 men, the vast majority of whom were Europeans, supported the Regular Army, and Wigg suggested that this was ‘the main source of strength’, as there was ‘provision for rapid mobilisation and expansion in times of emergency’.⁹⁸ However, it has been suggested that the Territorial Force was not terribly effective and its main function was to provide internal security, thereby releasing the Regular Army for combat duties.⁹⁹ The main weakness of the Rhodesian Army and Territorial Force was lack of firepower. In terms of small arms Regular infantry units were well equipped with the 7.62 mm Self Loading Rifle, the General Purpose Machine Gun, and 81 mm mortars. Active TF battalions also used the SLR, the Bren Light Machine Gun, Vickers Medium Machine Gun, and 3 inch mortars. However, these infantry units were supported by only a handful of Ferret Scout Cars and two eight gun batteries equipped with 25 pounder field guns.¹⁰⁰ This shortage

⁹⁷ BLPES: Wigg Papers, WIGG 4/68, ‘Southern Rhodesia – Military Situation’, para. 7.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 8.

⁹⁹ Croukamp, RLI, to author, 28 September 1999.

¹⁰⁰ BLPES: Wigg Papers, WIGG 4/68, ‘Southern Rhodesia – Military Situation’, para. 3.

of armour and artillery would have been a serious handicap to Rhodesian attempts to resist a British invasion. One former Rhodesian Light Infantryman has commented: 'I have no doubt that a British intervention force would not have taken long in stopping any resistance from the then very small and inexperienced army.'¹⁰¹ On the other hand, some former Rhodesian servicemen have suggested that the Rhodesian Army would have fought a bush war similar to the operations they later conducted against African nationalist forces. In these circumstances a British military intervention might have been much more protracted.¹⁰²

As noted above, the Rhodesian Army was supported by the BSAP, whose regular strength was around 6,000 men, two-thirds of whom were Africans. For George Wigg, the BSAP was the joker in the pack because it could ostensibly mobilise as many as 33,000 men in the event of an emergency.¹⁰³ This seems very impressive on paper, but most of the BSAP Reserve had a minimal level of training and the capabilities of the BSAP were extremely limited, as one former officer has commented:

I must point out that despite training in the use of various weapons the BSAP members [were only issued with] antiquated .303s (for parade purposes mainly) and boasted being the only Police Force in Africa not to be armed in the normal course of duty ... Our weapons and training would have been of little avail against even a modest British air/land assault ...¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Croukamp, RLI, to author, 28 September 1999.

¹⁰² Eldridge, RLI, to author, 23 November 2004; Walker, RLI, to author, 26 November 2004.

¹⁰³ BLPES: Wigg Papers, WIGG 4/68, 'Southern Rhodesia – Military Situation', para. 15.

¹⁰⁴ Gordon Johnston, BSAP 7354, to author, 28 December 1999.

It may therefore be argued that even though some elements of the Rhodesian security forces may have been inclined to resist British military intervention, on the whole they lacked sufficient capability to fight effectively against better-equipped opposition.

(iv) The danger of South African intervention

A further constraint on British military intervention was the fear that Rhodesian resistance might have been augmented by South African support. A British parliamentarian visiting South Africa was told that in the event of an invasion of Rhodesia, 'there would only be generals left in South Africa because everyone else would have gone over the border in plain clothes.'¹⁰⁵ There was perhaps some danger that South African volunteers might take up arms against British military intervention in Rhodesia, but whether the South African Government would have given any official sanction to this is highly debatable. The British Ambassador in South Africa suggested that in the event of a UDI, 'Dr Verwoerd would probably consider it in his interest to permit some measure of help, short of military involvement, to be given for the sake of preserving a White Government on his northern border.'¹⁰⁶ The qualification 'short of military involvement' is obviously crucial. The South African Government recognised that it was in a delicate position. On the one hand it was in the interests of the South African Government that white rule should be maintained in Southern Rhodesia, but on the other hand the South African

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Good, *UDI*, p. 58.

¹⁰⁶ TNA: PRO, PREM 13/86, 'South African/Southern Rhodesian relations', Despatch No. 61, Sir H. Stephenson, British Embassy, Pretoria, to Patrick Gordon Walker, Foreign Secretary, 21 October 1964, para. 8, in Philip Murphy (ed.), *British Documents on the End of Empire, Series B, Volume 9, Central Africa, Part II: Crisis and Dissolution 1959-1965* (London: The Stationery Office, 2005), p. 490.

Government had always remained committed to legality in international affairs and the principle of non-interference in domestic politics.¹⁰⁷ The problem of the mandated territory of Southwest Africa was also entering a crucial phase at the United Nations and a negative reaction against South Africa could have resulted on this issue if its Government intervened in support of Rhodesia.¹⁰⁸ A further point of concern was that if the United Nations applied sanctions against Rhodesia in the event of a UDI, they might next be applied against South Africa.¹⁰⁹ Ian Smith suggested in his memoirs that this actually worked in Rhodesia's favour, because the South Africans made it clear to the British Government: 'South Africa would not abandon Rhodesia, not only for moral reasons and because of our strong mutual ties, but because there was much evidence to indicate that if sanctions succeeded against Rhodesia, South Africa would be next on the list.'¹¹⁰ Sue Onslow has established that South Africa gave several forms of 'covert and tacit' support to Rhodesia during the period 1964-65.¹¹¹ This included loans to the Rhodesian Government (which it used for military purposes), building of strategically important railway lines, training of helicopter pilots, and discussion of intelligence and security matters.¹¹² In August 1967, almost two years after UDI, the South African

¹⁰⁷ Sue Onslow, 'A Question of Timing: South Africa and Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence, 1964-65', *Cold War History*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (May 2005), pp. 129-59.

¹⁰⁸ NAC: RG 25 Vol. 20-RSA-1-3-RHOD, R. G. Hatheway, Canadian Embassy, Pretoria, to Department of External Affairs, Ottawa, Cable No. 166, 8 October 1965.

¹⁰⁹ Anthony Lake, *The 'Tar Baby' Option. American Policy Toward Southern Rhodesia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), p. 55; and Onslow, 'A Question of Timing', p. 129.

¹¹⁰ I. D. Smith, *Bitter Harvest: The Great Betrayal and the Dreadful Aftermath* (London: Blake, 2001), p. 126.

¹¹¹ Onslow, 'A Question of Timing', p. 130.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, *passim*.

Government went even further, sending police units to assist Rhodesia against African nationalist incursions, but it is notable that South Africa lacked sufficient regular army units to offer greater support.¹¹³ No doubt the South African Government was alarmed by the increasing instability on its northern border. Douglas Anglin has argued that a settlement of the Rhodesian issue was therefore in South Africa's interests, which would have conditioned its attitude to British military intervention: 'British military objectives were clearly limited in scope, and moreover, direct British rule might have been positively welcomed in so far as it strengthened Rhodesia as a buffer against "terrorist" infiltration.'¹¹⁴ It therefore seems unlikely that there would have been much danger of an official South African retaliation against British military intervention.

(v) The British armed forces and the 'kith and kin' factor

Healey alleged in his memoirs that the British armed forces could not be trusted to execute orders for a military intervention against their Rhodesian 'kith and kin'. Healey recalled that he reprimanded the Chief of the General Staff, Sir James Cassels, over 'mutinous muttering among senior army officers.'¹¹⁵ There is no doubt that the Defence Secretary was made aware of the reservations of the military on several occasions. The

¹¹³ J. R. T. Wood to author, 18 January 2006.

¹¹⁴ Anglin, 'Britain and the Use of Force in Rhodesia', p. 71.

¹¹⁵ Healey, *Time of My Life*, p. 332. This allegation was repeated on British television in 1999: 'I remember Jim Cassels did warn me ... that there would be real difficulty ... I said "Tell them to keep their traps shut. I'm not going to have this sort of chatter. Public chatter would be mutiny, or the threat of mutiny. This is a political matter in which politicians take decisions and not the military." I didn't add, of course, that a wise politician takes notice of the views of the military on these issues.' *Rebellion!* (BBC Television, 1999), Part 1, 'Treachery'.

contingency plans submitted by the DPS during 1964 and 1965 contained warnings that military intervention ‘would give rise to an almost intolerable strain on the loyalties and morale of British troops involved.’¹¹⁶ Officials in the Ministry of Defence also reinforced this message. When Arthur Bottomley, the Commonwealth Secretary, enquired about the possibility of military intervention to protect Zambian copper production, the Defence Secretary was advised that ‘Action against Rhodesians of British origin would be a task deeply repugnant to our forces.’¹¹⁷ These opinions were supplemented by rumours that some commanding officers had consulted their officers to ask whether they would fight if ordered into Rhodesia. The results were allegedly negative; many apparently cited the precedent of the Curragh ‘mutiny’ in 1914.¹¹⁸ Hew Strachan has observed: ‘The evidence for this is largely anecdotal. Some officers serving in 1965 are categorical that they were consulted on these issues; some equally clearly state that they were not.’¹¹⁹ Nevertheless,

¹¹⁶ TNA: PRO, DEFE 32/17, DP 83/64 (Final), ‘Operations in Central Africa’, para. 34, 19 June 1964; DP 17/65 (Final), ‘The Kariba Dam. Note by the Directors of Defence Plans’, para. 49, 22 February 1965.

¹¹⁷ TNA: PRO, AIR 20/11189, ‘Rhodesia’, para. 7, 28 January 1965. DS 17 prepared this brief for OPD (65) 6th Meeting on 29 January 1965.

¹¹⁸ Good, *UDI*, p. 60; and Hew Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 178. In 1914 57 officers of the 3rd Cavalry Brigade stationed at the Curragh Barracks, near Dublin, said they would resign their commissions rather than impose Home Rule on Ireland against the wishes of the people of Ulster. The significance of this precedent was also highlighted in the ‘Rhodesian UDI’, ICBH Seminar, 6 September 2000, Session Two Transcript, p. 54. <http://www.icbh.ac.uk/icbh/witness/rhodesia> On the other hand, Healey suggested to one historian that the precedent of the Curragh incident ‘had not the slightest effect on the British Government’s decision against the use of force’. Healey to Donal Lowry, 19 March 1991. Cited in Lowry, ‘Ulster resistance and loyalist rebellion in the Empire’, pp. 212-13, n. 69.

¹¹⁹ Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army*, p. 286, n. 4. According to Paul Moorcroft, a lecturer at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst (1973-75), 90 per cent of junior army officers said that they would be unwilling to fight against Rhodesians. Moorcroft, *A Short Thousand Years: the end of Rhodesia’s rebellion*

although hard evidence of such consultation is lacking, the political significance of these rumours is that they ‘tended to serve as an alibi for inaction.’¹²⁰

Military intervention might have been distasteful to some senior British officers, particularly those who had close personal links with Rhodesia. The Assistant Chief of the Air Staff (Policy and Plans), Air Chief Marshal Sir Peter Fletcher, had been educated in Southern Rhodesia, trained in the Rhodesian Air Force, and during the Second World War served in the Rhodesian Air Training Group at Belvedere, Salisbury.¹²¹ Major-General John Willoughby, British GOC Middle East Land Forces (who would probably have commanded any British military intervention), enjoyed a close relationship with Major-General Rodney Putterill, GOC Rhodesian Army.¹²² Such links tended to shape the perceptions of some on the Rhodesian side. Brigadier Andrew Skeen, the Rhodesian High Commissioner in London, told his Government shortly before UDI that he had been assured by senior British officers that they would refuse to fight against Rhodesia.¹²³ However, the head of Rhodesian intelligence, Ken Flower, was not convinced:

I doubted Skeen’s claim that most British Commanders would refuse to fight against Rhodesia; on the contrary, CIO knew for certain that some of the senior commanders would willingly use force against Rhodesia.

(Salisbury: Galaxie Press, 1979), p. 18. Cited in Lowry, ‘Ulster resistance and loyalist rebellion in the Empire’, p. 212, n. 68.

¹²⁰ Adam Roberts, ‘The British Armed Forces and Politics: A Historical Perspective’, *Armed Forces and Society* Vol. 3, No. 4 (Summer 1977), p. 541.

¹²¹ Obituary, *The Independent*, 6 January 1999.

¹²² Flower, *Serving Secretly*, p. 57.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

British military tradition – loyalty to the Sovereign and a high sense of military discipline and national pride – would override any other considerations.¹²⁴

The armed forces of *both* countries owed their loyalty to the Crown and were trained in the tradition that politics is not the concern of the military. Lack of hard evidence makes it difficult to argue conclusively whether British forces would have fought, but it is certainly true that ‘the kith and kin factor was inflated to cover a general aversion to a military solution arising from other more compelling reasons.’¹²⁵ It is therefore essential to consider the economic and political situation in order to understand why the Labour Government eschewed the use of force.

Economic and political constraints on the use of force

The decision not to use force in the event of a UDI departed from the established use of the military during Britain’s disengagement from Empire. Peter Nailor has observed that ‘The type of military involvement was, classically, to threaten the use of, or to use, military force to delay the pace of political change; or, more simply, to keep some sort of order while political change was being negotiated.’¹²⁶ British troops were deployed in

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Good, *UDI*, p. 61.

¹²⁶ Peter Nailor, ‘The Ministry of Defence, 1959-70’, in Paul Smith (ed.) *Government and the Armed Forces in Britain, 1856-1990* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), p. 242.

this capacity in Malaya, Cyprus and Kenya, for example.¹²⁷ British forces were also deployed in East African states after they achieved independence; in early 1964 the Governments of Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya called upon Britain to suppress mutinies in their armed forces.¹²⁸ Further, the extent of British military support for the Malaysian Federation in its confrontation with Indonesia demonstrated Britain's continuing capacity to act on a global scale, which the Harold Wilson initially had no intention of changing. In his first major foreign policy speech Wilson declared 'We are a world power, and a world influence, or we are nothing.'¹²⁹ In December 1964, Wilson told the House of Commons that the Government would not preside over any dramatic scaling-down of Britain's military commitments:

I want to make it quite clear that whatever we may do in the field of cost effectiveness, value for money and a stringent review of expenditure, we cannot afford to relinquish our world role - our role which for shorthand purposes is sometimes called our 'East of Suez' role.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Malaya became independent in 1957; Cyprus achieved its independence in 1959, but with a British military presence 'in perpetuity'; Kenya became independent in 1963. See Robert F. Holland, *European Decolonization, 1918-1981: An Introductory Survey* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985).

¹²⁸ Waldemar Nielsen, *The Great Powers and Africa* (New York: Praeger, 1969), pp. 60-61.

¹²⁹ *The Times*, 17 November 1964. Quoted in D. J. Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled. British Policy and World Power in the 20th Century* (London: Longman, 1991), p. 227.

¹³⁰ Quoted in Grove, *Vanguard to Trident*, p. 267. It has been argued recently that 'The nucleus of the Wilson Cabinet consisted of men from the old Labour right who fervently supported the overseas military role ... The core of this Bevinite grouping included the Chancellor, James Callaghan, the Defence Secretary, Denis Healey; and the successive Foreign Secretaries of the first two Wilson regimes, Patrick Gordon Walker, Michael Stewart, and George Brown.' Jeffrey Pickering, 'Politics and "Black Tuesday": Shifting Power in the Cabinet and the Decision to Withdraw from east of Suez, November 1967-January

Behind this rhetoric, however, the foreign and defence policies of the Wilson Government were dictated by economic exigencies. The massive balance of payments deficit of £800 million, inherited from the Conservative Government, could probably have been dealt with most effectively by a devaluation of the pound, but this course of action was ruled out very quickly on political grounds. The Labour Government struggled to engineer an economic recovery with a combination of tax increases and spending cuts, including a defence review.¹³¹ On 28 January 1965, Callaghan announced to the Cabinet his plans for reducing public expenditure by 1970. He hoped to save some £500 million, of which £350 million would come from the defence budget, which in 1969-70 would be held at £2 billion, at 1964 prices. This move towards retrenchment in defence spending was given additional encouragement by George Brown and the Department for Economic Affairs. The National Plan, published in September 1965, argued that the defence sector was detrimental to the economy because it took up about 7 per cent of national output, 5 per cent of the labour force, and up to 40 per cent of British research and development. Defence consumed more resources than Britain's total investment in industrial plant and machinery, more than Britain was spending on consumer goods, and 50 per cent more than education.¹³² To curb defence spending, Healey focused initially on equipment

1968', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2002), p. 147. However, the Bevinite group was not entirely monolithic in its views and Wilson was increasingly out of step. James Callaghan and Patrick Gordon Walker, for example, had formed an impression well before taking office that Britain's bases East of Suez were neither particularly valuable nor tenable. See Peter Catterall, 'Foreign and Commonwealth Policy in Opposition: the Labour Party', in Wolfram Kaiser and Gillian Staerck (eds.), *British Foreign Policy 1955-64: Contracting Options* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), p. 103.

¹³¹ Alan Sked and Chris Cook, *Post-War Britain: A Political History* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), pp. 202-06.

¹³² Grove, *Vanguard to Trident*, pp. 268-69.

projects, which resulted in the abandonment of several aircraft programmes in favour of cheaper American alternatives, and the cancellation of the CVA01 aircraft carrier.¹³³ In these circumstances of economic retrenchment it became more unlikely that the Labour Government would have countenanced heavy expenditure on military intervention in Rhodesia.¹³⁴ Further, these economic considerations eventually had a strategic impact, as the cuts in the defence budget militated against the capacity of the armed forces to discharge their traditional multiple roles. In the Defence White Paper published in February 1966 the Government announced two major strategic principles that clearly conditioned its Rhodesia policy:

First, Britain will not undertake major operations of war except in co-operation with allies. Secondly, we will not accept an obligation to provide another country with military assistance unless it is prepared to provide us with the facilities we need to make such assistance effective in time.¹³⁵

With regard to the first principle, although the British Government could have asked the United States to provide logistical support for British military operations in Rhodesia, any military co-operation beyond that would have been out of the question. Similarly, there

¹³³ Ibid., pp. 269-76.

¹³⁴ However, there is nothing in the Cabinet minutes or in Treasury files to indicate that economic costs of military intervention were given explicit consideration. See TNA: PRO, T 225 Treasury: Defence Policy and Materiel Division: Registered Files (DM and 2DM Series), and T 317 Treasury: Finance - Overseas Development Divisions and Successors: Registered Files.

¹³⁵ Cmnd 2901, *Statement on the Defence Estimates 1966, Part 1 The Defence Review* (London: HMSO, 1966) Ch. 2, para. 19. Quoted in Grove, *Vanguard to Trident*, p. 277.

was no prospect that any of Britain's NATO allies or the 'Old' Commonwealth countries (Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) could have been prevailed upon to share the burden of military intervention in Rhodesia. The implications of the second principle were also far-reaching because it meant that 'seizing points of entry for an intervention force was to be avoided, as was any operation outside land-based air cover.'¹³⁶ The strategic principles of the Defence White Paper therefore militated against the possibility of British military intervention in Rhodesia.

There can be little doubt that the policy of the Wilson Government was also profoundly influenced by domestic political considerations. Views within the three main parties and the perceived significance of public opinion acted as a powerful brake on the use of force against Rhodesia. One former Labour MP, Dr David Kerr, has suggested 'it was very apparent in the Parliamentary Labour Party that there was no instinct for the use of force at all', which he thought reflected what was happening in Vietnam:

Vietnam rather captured the left wing of the Labour Party, both inside and outside the House, and the events were not going in Vietnam in such a way as to persuade the left wing of the Labour Party that similar incursions into Rhodesia, however morally justified, was a practical proposition.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ General Sir William Jackson and Field Marshal Lord Edwin Bramall, *The Chiefs. The Story of the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff* (London: Brassey's, 1992), p. 370.

¹³⁷ Dr David Kerr, MP for Wandsworth and Parliamentary Private Secretary, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 1967-69, in 'Rhodesian UDI', ICBH Witness Seminar, 6 September 2000, Session One Transcript, p. 26. <http://www.icbh.ac.uk/icbh/witness/rhodesia>

In these circumstances the Labour Government felt constrained by its parliamentary majority, which by the time of UDI was down to just one seat.¹³⁸ Ben Pimlott has observed: ‘A handful of Labour back-benchers could hold the precarious Government to ransom ... there was the nightmare possibility of a war strategy collapsing because of lack of parliamentary support.’¹³⁹ Labour MPs who may have defied the Party Whip included Woodrow Wyatt, Desmond Donnelly, Reginald Paget and Frederick Bellenger.¹⁴⁰ On the other hand, Wilson could probably have counted on the votes of most of the Liberals, which would have offset the adverse effect of any minor backbench rebellion in his own party.¹⁴¹ The leader of the Liberal Party, Jo Grimond, spoke publicly about the possibility of Liberal parliamentary support in relation to those issues on which the Liberals felt most strongly committed, such as industrial co-ownership and Europe.¹⁴² Although Grimond did not mention Rhodesia as a case in which Liberals would offer parliamentary support, it is reasonable to speculate that he and his colleagues would have supported military intervention. Jeremy Thorpe, MP for North Devon and leader of the Liberal Party from 1967, later wrote that British troops should have been stationed in

¹³⁸ Wilson, *The Labour Government*, p. 181.

¹³⁹ Ben Pimlott, *Harold Wilson* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 374. Good also asserted that a vote ‘would have been a near thing.’ *UDI*, p. 63.

¹⁴⁰ B. Reed and G. Williams, *Denis Healey and the Policies of Power* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1971), p. 190; Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, p. 59. Bottomley, *Commonwealth, Comrades and Friends*, p. 141.

¹⁴¹ Good, *UDI*, p. 63; Bottomley, *Commonwealth, Comrades and Friends*, p. 141.

¹⁴² Wilson, *The Labour Government*, p. 138.

Zambia and suggested that ‘the first shot to be fired at a British soldier would galvanise world opinion and give the British Government complete freedom to act.’¹⁴³

According to Barbara Castle, Minister for Overseas Development, ‘Harold Wilson was obsessed with the need to get a consensus with the Conservatives on Rhodesia if at all possible.’¹⁴⁴ Wilson largely succeeded in maintaining a bipartisan approach, though it should not be imagined that Conservative Party views on Rhodesia were monolithic. There was a small, but vocal, Rhodesia Lobby, headed by Lord Salisbury and Patrick Wall, which expressed its views mainly through the right-wing Monday Club. There was also a small faction of Progressives, whose views counterbalanced those of the Rhodesia Lobby.¹⁴⁵ However, the vast majority of Conservative MPs were uncommitted on the Rhodesian issue, which reflected the fact that it was so controversial.¹⁴⁶ The intention of

¹⁴³ Jeremy Thorpe, *In My Own Time. Reminiscences of a Liberal Leader* (London: Politico’s, 1999), p. 168. Thorpe’s predecessor as party leader did not mention the issue of Rhodesian independence in his recollections. Jo Grimond, *Memoirs* (London: Heinemann, 1979).

¹⁴⁴ Barbara Castle, *The Castle Diaries, 1964-1970* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984), p. xv. See also the comments of Sir Oliver Wright in ‘Rhodesian UDI’, ICBH Witness Seminar, 6 September 2000, Session One Transcript, p. 30. <http://www.icbh.ac.uk/icbh/witness/rhodesia>

¹⁴⁵ Sue Onslow, ‘The Conservative Party and UDI’, paper prepared for ‘Rhodesian UDI’, ICBH Witness Seminar, 6 September 2000, <http://www.icbh.ac.uk/icbh/witness/rhodesia>; and Mark Stuart, ‘A Party in Three Pieces: The Conservative Split over Rhodesian Oil Sanctions, 1965’, *Contemporary British History* Vol. 16 No. 1 (Spring 2002), pp. 51-88.

¹⁴⁶ Sir Teddy Taylor, MP for Glasgow Cathcart, in ‘Rhodesian UDI’, ICBH Witness Seminar, 6 September 2000, Session Two Transcript, p. 50. <http://www.icbh.ac.uk/icbh/witness/rhodesia> The Conservative Party may have learned its lesson from the issue of Northern Rhodesian independence, which according to Philip Murphy came close to splitting the Party. *Party Politics and Decolonization. The Conservative Party and British Colonial Policy in Tropical Africa 1951-1964* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 184-90.

the Party leadership to steer a moderate course was evident at the party's annual conference in October 1965. The Rhodesia Lobby pushed for a motion to declare the Party's total opposition to the use of military force or the imposition of economic sanctions, but the Party leadership defeated the proposed amendment and the official motion merely expressed hope that a UDI would not occur and that a settlement would be achieved through negotiation.¹⁴⁷ Mark Stuart has noted that after UDI the new Conservative Leader, Edward Heath, faced a dilemma: 'should [he] behave as the responsible leader of a government-in-waiting or take a more combative approach, which would appeal to his imperialist-minded right wing and the Conservative constituency associations, large numbers of whom were known to be sympathetic to Ian Smith?'¹⁴⁸ If Heath had adopted a more adversarial approach over Rhodesia it would have been a political mistake because 'Wilson could have claimed that the Opposition was being disloyal, endorsing an unconstitutional act, and racist in appearing to endorse a white regime.'¹⁴⁹ It may be argued that if the Labour Government had decided to use force against Rhodesia the Conservative predicament would have been no different, which brings into question Wilson's later claim that Heath 'would have led a united party, and almost certainly won majority support in the country.'¹⁵⁰ The reality of the situation in the Conservative Party became transparent in December 1965, with the three-way split over the policy of oil sanctions against Rhodesia. William Whitelaw, the Conservative Chief Whip at the time, later recalled, 'I always said that my biggest failure as Chief Whip, was that I had a party in three pieces.'¹⁵¹ It is hard to imagine that the very deep

¹⁴⁷ Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, p. 42.

¹⁴⁸ Stuart, 'A Party in Three Pieces', p. 53.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Wilson, *The Labour Government*, p. 181.

¹⁵¹ Stuart, 'A Party in Three Pieces', p. 52.

rifts within the Conservative Party would have suddenly receded into the background if the Labour Government had decided to use force against Rhodesia. It is more likely that British military intervention would have exacerbated rather than relieved Conservative discomfort.

The Wilson Government was also sensitive to public opinion on the use of force against Rhodesia. Public opinion does not necessarily imply the detailed scrutiny of government policy, particularly foreign policy, in which the vast majority of the public has no real interest.¹⁵² However, according to Paul Dixon ‘British political and military elites have *perceived* public opinion and the impact of casualties to be a significant or important constraint in military interventions.’¹⁵³ In the case of Rhodesia there was also potential linkage with domestic issues. The 1964 general election result had shown that black immigration was an emotive subject in Britain, which gave Wilson some political difficulties.¹⁵⁴ Wilson’s Political Secretary, Marcia Williams, recalled in her memoirs:

We realized that politically it was going to be very hard going indeed to convince the general public that Ian Smith was a right-wing reactionary

¹⁵² The Rhodesian problem was not even an issue in the general election of October 1964. D. Butler and A. King, *The British General Election of 1964* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1965), p. 121. Cited in Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, p. 29.

¹⁵³ Paul Dixon, ‘Britain’s “Vietnam Syndrome”? Public opinion and British military intervention from Palestine to Yugoslavia’, *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (January 2000), p. 101.

¹⁵⁴ Patrick Gordon Walker was defeated in his Smethwick constituency by the Conservative candidate, Peter Griffiths, who had run an overtly racist campaign. Walker nevertheless accepted the position of Foreign Secretary in Wilson’s Cabinet, but resigned when he failed to secure a parliamentary seat in a by-election. Wilson, *The Labour Government*, pp. 29 and 65-66.

and that Black Africans had the right to have a say in their own government in Rhodesia, and to convince them that the actions which Ian Smith was advocating could not be tolerated or accepted by the United Kingdom.¹⁵⁵

No doubt there were many in Britain who sympathised with Rhodesian 'kith and kin' and saw them as upholding Christian values, bringing civilization to Africa, and resisting the spread of Communism. However, this did not mean that the British public was entirely supportive of the white Rhodesian political agenda. Soon after Ian Smith made a visit to London for talks with Wilson in October 1965, an opinion poll showed that the British public was divided almost equally three ways between sympathy for the Europeans in Rhodesia, Africans and 'neither/both'. An overwhelming majority believed that independence should not be granted unless the conditions were acceptable to Rhodesians as a whole. However, there was almost no support for military intervention in the event of a UDI, with a majority in favour of referring the issue to the United Nations.¹⁵⁶ During Smith's visit, a Gallup Poll found that 41 per cent approved of the British Government's handling of the problem, 24 per cent disapproved and 35 per cent were undecided. After UDI, however, approval of British policy rose to 68 per cent and disapproval fell to 12 per cent, with 22 per cent in favour of the use of military force.¹⁵⁷ This evidence suggests that, with careful handling, the Labour Government could have engineered a

¹⁵⁵ M. Williams, *Inside Number 10* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), p. 62.

¹⁵⁶ Only two per cent were in favour of the use of military force, while 63 per cent wanted the matter taken to the United Nations (as noted above, p. 102). *National Opinion Poll Bulletin, Special Supplement 1, Rhodesia* (October 1965). Cited by E. Silver, 'Mr Wilson, the Public and Rhodesia' *Venture*, Vol. 18 (February 1966), p. 4.

¹⁵⁷ Gallup (October-November 1965). Cited by Silver 'Mr Wilson, the Public and Rhodesia', p. 5.

public consensus on the use of force, particularly as the public was poorly informed on the Rhodesian question.¹⁵⁸ Wilson might, for example, have exploited the indignity that he felt when he saw Rhodesian maltreatment of African nationalists whilst he was in Rhodesia in late October 1965.¹⁵⁹ This would have capitalised on the anti-imperialist and anti-racialist trend that had been developing in Britain since the Suez Crisis, which had been advanced by several crises and scandals such as the Nyasaland Emergency (March 1959), the atrocities at Hola detention camp (July 1959), the Sharpeville massacre (March 1960), and repression in Cyprus. Nicholas Owen has argued that these incidents were:

of crucial importance in enabling anti-colonialists to sustain the momentum of their campaign. It gave them an opportunity to tap the sympathies of hitherto undecided audiences such as church groups and university students. It enabled them to turn the tables on those opponents who had argued that the colonial framework was a guarantee of public order. They could also point to a widening international consensus that the repression of colonial dissent had become illegitimate and as such damaging to Britain's reputation at the United Nations and elsewhere.¹⁶⁰

Such arguments were articulated by the liberal and socialist press: *The Observer*, *The Guardian*, *New Statesman*, and *Tribune*, all of which urged the Labour Government not to

¹⁵⁸ Rhodes House Library [hereafter RHL], Oxford: Papers of the Africa Bureau, MSS Afr. s1681, Box 258 File 2, Conference Report, 10 February 1965.

¹⁵⁹ Wilson, *The Labour Government*, pp. 158-60.

¹⁶⁰ Nicholas Owen, 'Critics of Empire in Britain', in Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis, *The Oxford History of the British Empire Volume IV: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 206.

compromise with Ian Smith.¹⁶¹ Pressure groups such as the Fabian Society, the Africa Bureau and the Movement for Colonial Freedom also attempted to influence the Parliamentary Labour Party and the Government to take military action against Rhodesia.¹⁶² Even the Archbishop of Canterbury put forward a case for military intervention. Shortly before UDI, Dr Michael Ramsay issued a message on behalf of the British Council of Churches, which assured the Government that many Christians would support the use of force if all other efforts to find a solution failed. A group of 35 MPs sent a message to the Archbishop, congratulating the Council of Churches on its courageous stand.¹⁶³

Douglas Anglin has noted that ‘The individuals and groups in Britain prepared to support military measures were less numerous, vocal, and well connected and less well organized and financed than the powerful Rhodesia lobby.’¹⁶⁴ Nevertheless, political and public

¹⁶¹ See, for example, ‘No Munich in Africa’, *The Observer*, 3 October 1965, an editorial piece in which it was argued that if talks between Wilson and Smith broke down, the British Government should secure agreement to send Commonwealth and American forces, under OAU agreement, to Zambia and Malawi. It was argued that this would signal intent that a UDI would not be allowed to succeed.

¹⁶² BLPES: Papers of the Fabian Society, J73a/1 ff. 22-24, ‘Appeal to All Labour MPs on Rhodesia by the Africa Bureau’, (n.d. but probably September 1965); RHL Oxford: Papers of the Africa Bureau, MSS Afr. s1681, Box 258 File 5, ‘Note on Rhodesia Meeting Convened by Africa Bureau, House of Commons, 6 December 1965’; School of Oriental and African Studies, London: Archives of the Movement for Colonial Freedom, Box 84, Fenner Brockway, ‘Sanctions are not enough’, *Colonial Freedom News* (December 1965).

¹⁶³ These included a wide cross-section of the PLP, ranging from Eric Heffer on the Left to Shirley Williams on the right, and a few Liberals. Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, p. 61.

¹⁶⁴ Anglin, *Britain and the Use of Force*, p. 73.

opinion on the Rhodesian issue was somewhat equivocal, rather than stacked hopelessly against military intervention. Wilson could have marginalised the ‘kith and kin’ issue by appealing to the national conscience to justify British military intervention in Rhodesia, or alternatively he might have tapped into the potential jingoism of the British public, who ‘would not take kindly to being pushed around by colonials, even white ones, and the illegal seizure of power in a British colony was an affront to British sensibilities on the subject of being a second-rate power.’¹⁶⁵ It is clear that the Labour Government failed totally in the ‘propaganda war’, which is an essential method of ‘sustaining the determination and morale of the domestic audience while attempting to break the opponent’s will to resist.’¹⁶⁶

A ‘classic strategic blunder’: the failure of deterrence and the British response to UDI

In his biography of Wilson, Ben Pimlott commented that until Ian Smith’s visit to London in October 1965, ‘Wilson and his ministers had handled the Rhodesian adventurers with skill, displaying a mixture of consistency of purpose and patience,’ which is an impression that was shared by Healey.¹⁶⁷ At this juncture, however, Wilson made a gross error that is difficult to understand: he allowed Smith to form the impression that the British Government did not consider the use of force against Rhodesia to be practical. According to Ken Flower, the Rhodesian Front had until this point been concerned about the likelihood of a British military response to a UDI, but when Smith returned from London the Rhodesian Security Council decided to declare independence at the earliest

¹⁶⁵ Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, p. 60.

¹⁶⁶ Dixon, ‘Britain’s “Vietnam Syndrome”?’’, p. 100.

¹⁶⁷ Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, p. 369; Healey, *Time of My Life*, p. 331.

opportunity.¹⁶⁸ Wilson encouraged the Rhodesians further in his press conference of 30 October and statement in the House of Commons on 1 November, in which he announced: ‘If there are those in this country who are thinking in terms of a thunderbolt, hurtling through the sky and destroying their enemy, a thunderbolt in the shape of the Royal Air Force, let me say that this thunderbolt will not be coming.’¹⁶⁹

It was one thing for the British Government privately to rule out the use of force against Rhodesia, but it was quite another for Wilson to make this decision known publicly. Healey thought that this was a ‘classic strategic blunder’, since it effectively gave the green light for a UDI.¹⁷⁰ Yet Healey was hardly blameless. In August 1965, when the press alleged that the Government was considering a plan for intervention in Rhodesia, Healey had condemned the report as ‘irresponsible speculation’, when he could simply have remained silent.¹⁷¹ The Government also failed to use its diplomatic channels, military liaison, and intelligence networks to create doubt in the minds of the Rhodesian Front about the likely nature of a British response to a UDI.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ Flower, *Serving Secretly*, pp. 47-51.

¹⁶⁹ Quoted in Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, p. 371; and Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, p. 49.

¹⁷⁰ Healey, *Time of My Life*, p. 332.

¹⁷¹ ‘Police Action Plan for Rhodesia Considered’, was written by the military correspondent of *The Times*, 4 August 1965. Cited in Good, *UDI*, p. 63.

¹⁷² As noted above, Brigadier Skeen claimed to have been told that military intervention had been ruled out. Flower, *Serving Secretly*, p. 57. On the other hand, British intelligence had allegedly warned the Rhodesian Government not to take any action against the Kariba Dam. Leigh, *The Wilson Plot*, p. 106.

Wilson's private and public statements concerning the Government's intentions were clearly at odds with the principles of deterrence.¹⁷³ Although the Government made it clear that it would not grant independence to Rhodesia unless the conditions were acceptable to the population as a whole, it did not signal that it would take whatever action was necessary to defend this position, despite some pressure for Wilson to do so before negotiations reached crisis point.¹⁷⁴ The Rhodesian Front therefore perceived that black majority rule in Rhodesia was not vital to British interests. It is difficult to know whether the Rhodesian Government would have acted differently if Wilson had sent different signals, but the fact that he failed to leave the threat of force on the table requires some explanation. A number of reasons can be suggested. First, the Labour Government was perpetually concerned about the stability of sterling, as Robert Good has argued: 'When Wilson declared "no force in Rhodesia" he was talking as much to Britain's financial creditors as to any other audience.'¹⁷⁵ Second, Wilson was undoubtedly motivated by the desire to preserve cross-party support for his policy on Rhodesia.¹⁷⁶ Failure to make an explicit statement that military intervention was not being contemplated to settle the issue may have jeopardised the Government's parliamentary

¹⁷³ A deterrent policy is formulated by communicating a clear commitment to defend declared interests. It depends upon demonstration of political will and possession of capabilities that represent a sufficiently credible threat to an opponent. See G. A. Craig and A. L. George, *Force and Statecraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 179. The failure of deterrence is also considered below, Ch. 4, pp. 223 ff.

¹⁷⁴ In April 1965 George Cunningham drafted a telegram making it clear to the Rhodesian Government that the British Government would use force if necessary to restore a legal government in Rhodesia following a UDI. Harold Wilson replied through his political secretary: 'Tell him to burn it.' Cunningham in 'Rhodesian UDI', ICBH Witness Seminar, 6 September 2000, Session One Transcript, p. 19. <http://www.icbh.ac.uk/icbh/witness/rhodesia>

¹⁷⁵ Good, *UDI*, p. 61.

¹⁷⁶ Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, p. 375.

majority in the same way as the actual use of force. Third, as Sir Oliver Wright has observed, 'it helped to keep domestic opinion steady.'¹⁷⁷ Wilson may have calculated that unless British military intervention was ruled out explicitly it could have caused public dissent. On this theme Stephen Howe has commented:

To governments eager to preempt possible crisis and confrontation at home as in the colonies themselves, there could never be any guarantee that the relative lack of popular protest over Malaya, Kenya, or Cyprus would continue to be replicated. Suez was the great warning signal ...¹⁷⁸

Fourth, Wilson was signalling to the African nationalists in Rhodesia that they should face up to the reality that the British Government was not going to intervene militarily and they must therefore modify their demands for immediate majority rule in Rhodesia.¹⁷⁹ Finally, Wilson believed in the utility of economic sanctions as a deterrent and, after the failure of deterrence, as an instrument of coercive diplomacy.¹⁸⁰ This was a distinctly non-rational assumption, because it was quickly established in the Defence and Oversea

¹⁷⁷ Sir Oliver Wright in 'Rhodesian UDI', ICBH Witness Seminar, 6 September 2000, Session One Transcript, p. 31. <http://www.icbh.ac.uk/icbh/witness/rhodesia>

¹⁷⁸ Stephen Howe, *Anti-Colonialism in British Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 325. Quoted in Dixon, 'Britain's Vietnam Syndrome?' p. 106. Cecil King noted in December 1965 that 'Wilson had had constantly in mind Suez, Cuba and the Bay of Pigs.' *The Cecil King Diary, 1965-1970* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972), p. 45, entry for Wednesday 8 December 1965.

¹⁷⁹ Philip Murphy, *British Documents on the End of Empire, Series B, Volume 9, Part I: Closer Association, 1945-1958* (London: The Stationery Office, 2005), p. cvi; and Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, p. 49.

¹⁸⁰ Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, p. 375.

Policy Committee that South Africa would be likely to break an oil embargo, which therefore meant that no serious damage could be done to the Rhodesian economy for over a year.¹⁸¹

Yet despite all his misgivings about the use of force or even the threat of force, it appears that by the end of 1965 Wilson had become more receptive to the idea of military intervention, which may have been related to his private scepticism about the ability of economic sanctions to bring the rebellion to a swift end. Wilson requested Healey to produce:

[A] choice of plans to fit quite a wide range of possible circumstances, extending from one extreme (at which no more than a token military intervention in Rhodesia would be required) to the other extreme (at which we might have to contemplate a virtual invasion of the country against both political and military opposition, followed by a period of what could be, in effect, military occupation and administration).¹⁸²

Wilson's change of mind was also known in Washington, which tends to suggest that Wilson was indeed serious about military intervention.¹⁸³ However, subsequent

¹⁸¹TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, Minutes of OPD (65) 51st Meeting, Item 1, 'Rhodesia: oil sanctions', 17 November 1965. British officials had questioned the efficacy of sanctions throughout 1965. See above, Ch. 1, p. 86, n. 211.

¹⁸² TNA: PRO, DEFE 32/17, Wilson to Healey, Minute No. T2/66, 8 January 1966.

¹⁸³ The Central Intelligence Agency Office of National Estimates reported that Wilson was 'actively considering' the use of force and in the event of military intervention 'the Rhodesian forces would probably not put up serious armed resistance.' LBJL: National Security File, Box 97, Rhodesia Country File,

correspondence between officials in the Ministry of Defence indicates that plans were designed to highlight the *difficulties* of intervention, so that the Prime Minister could argue at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Lagos why force should *not* be used to end the Rhodesian rebellion.¹⁸⁴ This may have reflected a bureaucratic reluctance to overturn an established line of policy. Officials had advised Healey in November 1964 that military intervention, which would be undertaken only at the request of the Governor and subject to the condition of unopposed entry, ‘would essentially be something that could only be undertaken in the very first days after a Unilateral Declaration while the Governor was still trying to form an alternative government.’ Clearly, these circumstances did not exist in early 1966, so the possibility of military intervention in the official mind had long since passed, if it ever existed.¹⁸⁵

Conclusion

Sir Anthony Parsons, a former British Ambassador to the United Nations, has commented: ‘By the late 1970s the problem of Southern Rhodesia was hanging like the Ancient Mariner’s albatross round the necks of British foreign policymakers, its weight increasing with the years.’¹⁸⁶ This chapter has suggested that this burden might have been avoided if the British Government had either handed responsibility for Rhodesia to

‘Volume 1, 12/63-1/66’, Central Intelligence Agency Special Memorandum No. 30-65, 21 December 1965.

This document was declassified in November 2004 pursuant to a Mandatory Review request.

¹⁸⁴ TNA: PRO, DEFE 24/72, ‘Implication of British military intervention in Rhodesia’, *passim*.

¹⁸⁵ TNA: PRO, AIR 20/11189, MISC 4/7 ‘British Action in Event of UDI by Southern Rhodesia’, 24 November 1964.

¹⁸⁶ Anthony Parsons, ‘The Unnoticed Watershed’, *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (July 1993), p. 159.

the United Nations, or used force to impose a settlement in Rhodesia. In the Foreign Office, which had to defend Britain's policy to the international community, there was a feeling that the European minority in Rhodesia should not be allowed 'to hold our whole international policy to ransom'.¹⁸⁷ Handing the matter over to the United Nations would have rid Britain of this problem. However, Foreign Office officials were concerned that if Britain conceded UN competence to deal with Rhodesia it would lead to an international campaign against South Africa, which would gravely prejudice British economic interests. Foreign Office officials also acknowledged that 'Logically the obvious course would be to use troops', but noted that ministers had explicitly ruled this out.¹⁸⁸ The Wilson Government was highly resistant to military intervention in Rhodesia for several reasons. First, and perhaps most significant, Britain's economic weakness generated a rolling defence review that was progressively undermining the capability of the British armed forces to execute their various roles, which constituted a powerful constraint on any deployment in southern Africa. Second, parliamentary and electoral concerns made Wilson and the Cabinet reluctant to take what it perceived as unnecessary risks. Against this background the Government received pessimistic advice from the Chiefs of Staff and officials in the Ministry of Defence, which was based on erroneous assessment of the respective attitudes and capabilities of the Rhodesian and British armed forces. This advice, combined with the 'kith and kin' factor, became a convenient pretext to avoid the use of force. All of this tends to support Sir Oliver Wright's belief in the 'supremacy of the domestic over foreign'.¹⁸⁹ Yet none of these factors taken in isolation

¹⁸⁷ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181877, Minute by Derrick March, 24 May 1965.

¹⁸⁸ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181877, Minute by R. J. M. Wilson, 9 June 1965.

¹⁸⁹ Sir Oliver Wright in 'Rhodesian UDI', ICBH Witness Seminar, 6 September 2000, Session One Transcript, p. 30. <http://www.icbh.ac.uk/icbh/witness/rhodesia>

or, indeed, in combination, precluded the use of force as a viable option, particularly if military intervention had been politically well-orchestrated. The failure to implement a successful deterrent was perhaps the most lamentable aspect of the Wilson Government's policy on Rhodesia. This profound error of judgement contributed to the 'many uncomfortable moments' with which successive British Governments were burdened unnecessarily for the next fifteen years.¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ Callaghan, *Time and Chance*, p. 145.

PART TWO

THE COMMONWEALTH AND THE RHODESIAN CRISIS, 1964-65

Chapter Three

The Old Commonwealth: Racial Attitudes and the Rhodesian Crisis

Introduction

In 1958 the Australian historian Bruce Miller famously described the Commonwealth as a ‘concert of convenience’, and suggested that although it did not go as far as to encompass ‘a common set of values’ its members nevertheless considered it to be a convenient forum for consultation and cooperation.¹ This underlying congeniality may explain why the Commonwealth was able to survive some significant disagreements during the post-War period, most notably during the Suez Crisis. However, during the late 1950s and the early 1960s the admission to the Commonwealth of newly independent African states transformed the nature of the association.² African membership heightened sensitivities within the Commonwealth about issues of racial equality, which threatened to undermine the ‘concert’. On the emotional questions of apartheid in South Africa and racial discrimination in Rhodesia, it is notable that Canada adopted a much more positive attitude towards African concerns than either Australia or New Zealand. This divergence in attitudes can be explained by three factors: an obvious contrast in their conceptions of the Commonwealth; their different diplomatic styles and political objectives; and, most significantly, a powerful undercurrent of racialism in Australia and New Zealand in the political, official, and public domains.

¹ J. D. B. Miller, *The Commonwealth in the World* (London: Duckworth, 1958), pp. 275 and 292.

² Idem, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of Expansion and Attrition 1953-1969* (London: Oxford University Press for The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1974), Ch. 7, ‘The African Transformation’, pp. 101-25.

The Old Commonwealth and racial equality

Canada, Australia, and New Zealand conceptualised their membership of the Commonwealth in radically different terms. For example, in 1966 British officials in Canberra characterised the Australian understanding of the Commonwealth as ‘an ANZAC relationship with Britain’, and observed that ‘for Australia, the only fully meaningful relationship within the Commonwealth is the trilateral one with Britain and New Zealand’; whereas British diplomats in Ottawa reported that ‘the concept of the new, multi-racial, Commonwealth plays a significant part in Canada’s external policies’.³ In terms of diplomatic style and political objectives, Canada tended to adopt a conciliatory posture towards African states because it emphasised the importance of the Commonwealth as one of several vehicles for increasing Canadian influence in Africa.⁴ Australia and New Zealand, on the other hand, had little interest in Africa and tended to

³ The National Archives [hereafter TNA]: Public Records Office, Kew [hereafter PRO], DO 193/79, Eleanor J. Emery, Counsellor, British High Commission, Canada, to R. Walker, CRO, London, 1 December 1966, para. 2; DO 193/79, O’Leary to Walker, 30 November 1966, para. 3; in S. R. Ashton and Wm. Roger Louis (eds.), *British Documents on the End of Empire Project* [hereafter *BDEEP*] *Series A, Volume 5, East of Suez and the Commonwealth, Part II: Europe, Rhodesia, Commonwealth* (London: The Stationery Office, 2004), pp. 348 and 354. See also Lester B. Pearson, *Mike: The Memoirs of the Rt. Hon. Lester B. Pearson Volume 3: 1957-1968* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975); Paul Martin, ‘Canada and the Commonwealth’ in *Paul Martin Speaks for Canada: A Selection of Speeches on Foreign Policy 1964-67* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967); and his autobiography, *A Very Public Life Volume II: So Many Worlds* (Toronto: Deneau Publishers, 1985). In 1968 Pierre Trudeau replaced Lester Pearson and Canadian concern with the Commonwealth waned as its desire to establish a better relationship with francophone states waxed. Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, p. 371.

⁴ TNA: PRO, DO 193/79, Emery to Walker, 1 December 1966, para. 6, in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, p. 356. This feature of Canadian diplomacy is explored further in the next chapter.

concentrate more on their regional concerns in South East Asia.⁵ As one commentator on Australian foreign policy in the 1960s noted:

In a broad sense Australian policy had to take account of the fact that the focal point of international tension had shifted from Europe to Asia. Despite the prominence of Africa and the undeniable importance of the racial controversies surrounding South Africa and Rhodesia, it seemed increasingly clear that the great international issues of the day were finding their strongest expression in Asia and South East Asia, and that this in the immediate future was the area in which they were most likely to be decided.⁶

A significant reason why South Africa and Rhodesia were of ‘undeniable importance’ is that Commonwealth debate about these issues exposed the Old Commonwealth to scrutiny of their own domestic racial policies. Canada, Australia and New Zealand were biracial societies, and their governments pursued policies of assimilation or integration of indigenous minorities.⁷ However, racial issues were not as pronounced in Canada as they

⁵ TNA: PRO, DO 193/79, O’Leary to Walker, 30 November 1966, paras. 6 and 7, in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, pp. 349-50.

⁶ Gordon Greenwood, ‘Australian Foreign Policy in Action’, in Gordon Greenwood and Norman Harper (eds.), *Australia in World Affairs, 1961-1965* (Vancouver: University of Columbia Press, 1968), p. 12. Similarly, New Zealand also remained firmly focused on its interests in Asia and the South Pacific. See W. D. McIntyre, ‘From Dual Dependency to Nuclear Free’, in Geoffrey W. Rice (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2nd edn. 1992), pp. 532-33.

⁷ A policy of assimilation aims to extinguish native culture and compel acceptance of the white majority culture, whereas a policy of integration requires indigenous minorities to accommodate to white society but

were in Australia and New Zealand, so Canadians therefore felt less vulnerable to criticism from the newer, Afro-Asian members of the Commonwealth and were more willing to engage them on the subjects that were of greatest concern to them, such as racial discrimination, aid and development.

The prospect of British decolonisation in Africa generated a great deal of scepticism among some of the older, white members of the Commonwealth, as historian William McIntyre has observed: ‘when Kwame Nkrumah demanded Dominion Status for the Gold Coast in 1951 there were shudders, especially in Pretoria, at the prospect of a “Black Dominion”.’⁸ Conservative politicians in Britain flirted with the idea of a two-tier structure for the Commonwealth, which would preserve the ‘club-like’ atmosphere for the older members, whilst confining new members to an outer circle.⁹ However, these ideas did not get very far and in 1957 newly independent Ghana became a full member of the

encourages retention of some aspects of minority culture, e.g. production and sale of native clothing, tools, and instruments. Segregation, as practiced in South Africa, used race and colour as a legitimate basis to differentiate in law and for the provision of services, and aimed at separate development. Colin M. Tatz, *Four kinds of dominion: comparative race politics in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa* (Armidale: University of New England, 1972), pp. 5-6.

⁸ W. D. McIntyre, ‘Commonwealth Legacy’, in Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (eds.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire Volume IV: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 697.

⁹ John Holmes, ‘The Impact on the Commonwealth of the Emergence of Africa’, in Norman J. Padelford and Rupert Emerson (eds.), *Africa and World Order* (New York: Praeger, 1963), p. 29; Ronald Hyam, ‘Winds of Change: the Empire and Commonwealth’, in Wolfram Kaiser and Gillian Staerck (eds.), *British Foreign Policy 1955-64: Contracting Options* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 203-04; McIntyre, ‘Commonwealth Legacy’, in Brown and Louis (eds.), *Oxford History of the British Empire*, Vol. IV, p. 698.

Commonwealth (and quickly became the leader of pan-African aspirations).¹⁰ In Australia the political establishment wondered aloud about the viability of the changing Commonwealth. In 1956 Sir Eric Harrison, the Australian High Commissioner in London, opined that it really ought to be a *British* Commonwealth.¹¹ In March 1957 Alexander Downer, an Australian MP who subsequently entered the Menzies Government as Minister for Immigration (1958-63), commented that:

In striving to accommodate many diverse policies, conflicting ambitions, irreconcilable philosophies, in maintaining that opponents are our friends, there is a danger that the whole thing will dissolve into thin air ... more than anything else I believe in the Commonwealth, but it must be a co-operative Commonwealth in fact not just a historical fiction.¹²

By the end of the 1960s there was in Australia 'an attitude of near-contempt for the new Commonwealth structure which had arisen'.¹³ This reflected a number of developments that had accentuated problems of race relations since the beginning of the decade. In

¹⁰ Wm. R. Louis, 'The Dissolution of the British Empire', in Brown and Louis (eds.), *Oxford History of the British Empire*, Vol. IV, pp. 347 and 349.

¹¹ J. D. B. Miller, 'An Empire That Don't Care What You Do', in A. F. Madden and W. H. Morris-Jones, *Australia and Britain: Studies in a Changing Relationship* (London: Cass, for the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 1980), p. 97.

¹² Quoted in Sir Alan Watt, *The Evolution of Australian Foreign Policy, 1938-1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 287. In August 1965 Sir Alexander Downer became Australian High Commissioner in London.

¹³ Miller, 'An Empire That Don't Care What You Do', in Madden and Morris-Jones, *Australia and Britain*, p. 98.

1960 the United Nations admitted seventeen new states and passed the *Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples*, which recognised the right of all peoples to self-determination and the obligation of colonial powers to effect an immediate transfer of power to their dependent peoples. In the same year the Sharpeville Massacre in the Transvaal and Harold Macmillan's 'Wind of Change' speech shone a spotlight on apartheid in South Africa.¹⁴ This issue came to a head at the Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference in March 1961, when South Africa applied to retain her membership of the Commonwealth after becoming a republic. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa of Nigeria, and Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Ceylon vociferously opposed continued South African membership. Julius Nyerere also wrote a newspaper article stating that Tanganyika, which was scheduled to become independent in December 1961, could not join the Commonwealth if it included a state pursuing racist policies.¹⁵ The Commonwealth avoided a disastrous split because the South African Prime Minister, Hendrick Verwoerd, withdrew his Government's application and in doing so South Africa left the Commonwealth. Verwoerd claimed that his Government bowed to pressure not only in South Africa's interests but also in the interests of 'our friends in the Commonwealth, particularly the United Kingdom. I could not place them

¹⁴ Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, pp. 140-42. See Ch. 8, 'The South African Problem', pp. 126-66, which discusses the South African problem between the late 1940s and the 1960s.

¹⁵ Holmes, 'The Impact on the Commonwealth of the Emergence of Africa', in Padelford and Emerson (eds.), *Africa and World Order*, pp. 29-30; Hyam, 'Winds of Change: the Empire and Commonwealth', in Kaiser and Staerck (eds.), *British Foreign Policy 1955-64*, p. 204; Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, pp. 152-55.

in the invidious position of having to choose between South Africa and a group of Afro-Asian states.’¹⁶

The positions taken by Canada, Australia and New Zealand on the South African issue presaged their attitudes towards the matter of Rhodesian independence. Until 1960 Canada pursued a policy of ‘disinterested detachment’ towards southern Africa, but the changing international environment compelled a change of attitude in Ottawa. The Canadian Government feared that the Soviet Union would exploit colonial issues at the United Nations to foster an anti-Western attitude among African states. The Canadian Government therefore determined that it should become much more active on colonial and racial issues.¹⁷ By the time of the 1961 Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Conference it was obvious to Canadians that apartheid was inconsistent with the multi-racial character of the Commonwealth, and the problem could no longer be ignored.¹⁸ Typically, Canadian politicians and diplomats worked quietly behind the scenes to produce compromise solutions to difficult problems, but on the issue of apartheid the Canadian Prime Minister, John Diefenbaker, ‘preferred to appear as one of the lead architects of change’, and took a very personal stand against continued South African membership of

¹⁶ Quoted in James Barber, ‘The Impact of the Rhodesian Crisis on the Commonwealth’, *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (July 1969), p. 87; also cited in Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, p. 156.

¹⁷ Robert Matthews and Cranford Pratt, ‘Canadian Policy Towards Southern Africa’, in Douglas G. Anglin, T. Shaw, and C. Widstrand (eds.), *Canada, Scandinavia and Southern Africa* (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1978), pp. 164-66.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

the Commonwealth.¹⁹ Robert Menzies later wrote that Diefenbaker ‘came armed with a resolution of his Parliament and presented his views with immense emotion. Not even some side-queries to him about the Red Indians and the Eskimos in Canada could deflect him from his course.’²⁰ This comment indicates that even the Canadian Government was not immune from criticism on racial matters, partly because of federal laws defining the status of natives and partly as a result of provincial attempts to assimilate indigenous peoples.²¹ However, this did not deter Canadian politicians from emphasising the multi-racial nature of the Commonwealth. For example, in his address to the Royal Commonwealth Society in Montreal in May 1966, Lester Pearson, Diefenbaker’s successor as Prime Minister of Canada (1963-68), declared that ‘the greatest value of the new Commonwealth is [that it is] a multi-racial association at a time when the world is crying out for that kind of association.’ Similarly, in his memoirs Pearson described the Commonwealth as:

¹⁹ Andrew F. Cooper, *Canadian Foreign Policy: Old Habits and New Directions* (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall, 1997), p. 40.

²⁰ Sir Robert Menzies, *Afternoon Light: some memories of men and events* (London: Cassell, 1967), p. 213.

²¹ In Canada the Federal Government has a ‘fiduciary responsibility’ for native peoples such as the Innu, and as no other groups in Canadian society have such a direct relationship with the state, ‘These legalities constitute natives as a separate category of citizen. By doing so, the law, itself imposed, exposes the colonial nature of the relationship between the state and native peoples.’ Colin Samson, ‘Rights as the reward for simulated cultural sameness: the Innu in the Canadian colonial context’, in Jane K. Cowan *et al* (eds.), *Culture and Rights: Anthropological Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 227-28. During the 1950s and 1960s the Provincial Government in Newfoundland pursued a vigorous sedentarisation policy towards the nomadic Innu, which resulted in the formation of two settlements in Labrador. Through their acceptance of cultural sameness the Innu acquired rights to housing, healthcare, work, welfare and schooling. *Ibid.*, pp. 230-33.

a fellowship, the great value of which stems from the fact that it is an association of peoples of every race, freely joined together as equals in the hope that they have something to offer one another and can give the world an example of inter-racial as well as international friendship and co-operation.²²

In Australia there were no such plaudits for the Commonwealth. After the Sharpeville Massacre, Robert Menzies had expressed to the Australian House of Representatives his regret at the loss of life in South Africa but he refused to condemn apartheid.²³ Menzies felt that apartheid was an issue on which Australia and the Commonwealth should not interfere and deplored the 'busy-bodies' who believed that they had the right to pass judgement on matters of domestic jurisdiction.²⁴ The New Zealand position was somewhat different as it had, since 1957, accepted that the United Nations had some competence to discuss apartheid on the grounds that: 'The human rights provisions of the Charter imposed a general obligation on all states to move towards rather than away from increasing respect for human rights. Extreme and deliberate breaches of these provisions in effect forfeited the protection of Article 2 (7).'²⁵

²² Pearson, *Mike*, Vol. 3, p. 312.

²³ A South African newspaper, the *Transvaaler*, carried a cartoon showing a young girl - representing South Africa - shaking hands with Menzies and saying *Dankie Oom Robert* ('Thank You, Uncle Robert'). Alan W. Martin, *Robert Menzies: A Life* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1999), Vol. 2, p. 413.

²⁴ Menzies, *Afternoon Light*, p. 193.

²⁵ H. C. Templeton, 'New Zealand and Africa', in *New Zealand External Affairs Review*, Vol. XVII, No. 1 (January 1967), p. 9. Templeton was First Secretary in the New Zealand Mission to the United Nations. Quoted in R. Kennaway, *New Zealand Foreign Policy 1951-1971* (Wellington: Hicks Smith, 1972), p. 136.

At the 1961 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting Keith Holyoake, the Prime Minister of New Zealand (1960-72), cautioned against the withdrawal of South Africa from the Commonwealth because it would 'lead to exclusion of some nine or ten million coloured people of South Africa.'²⁶ Holyoake put a gloss on the outcome of the Meeting, as he later told the New Zealand House of Representatives: 'I believe that by its determination to stand for the principle of racial equality the Commonwealth, far from beginning to disintegrate, has demonstrated its strength and its capacity to serve great and worthwhile ideals.'²⁷ Yet Holyoake, like Menzies, had reason to lament the attention that racial issues were now receiving in the Commonwealth. As one contemporary commentator observed: 'There is a fear ... that once the hypothesis that a member can be judged for offending against Commonwealth principles has been accepted, no member is immune from the hostility of a majority'.²⁸ To understand the reasons behind such fears it is necessary to analyse the links between the domestic and foreign policies of Australia and New Zealand.

A background factor that explains why the Australian Government was so concerned to preserve the right of domestic jurisdiction was the traditional legalistic emphasis in Australian constitutional politics, which was also reflected in the formulation and conduct

²⁶ Holyoake to Marshall, 15 March 1961. Holyoake blamed South Africa's withdrawal on Verwoerd's intransigence as much as Afro-Asian pressure. Quoted in Malcolm McKinnon, *Independence and Foreign Policy: New Zealand in the World Since 1935* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1993), p. 234.

²⁷ New Zealand Debates, House of Representatives, 4 July 1961, p. 220. Quoted in Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, p. 156, n. 5.

²⁸ Holmes, 'The Impact on the Commonwealth of the Emergence of Africa', in Padelford and Emerson (eds.), *Africa and World Order*, p. 31.

of Australian foreign policy.²⁹ Robert Menzies, who was a barrister by training, was particularly wedded to constitutional conventions.³⁰ Yet Australian defence of domestic jurisdiction was far from a simple matter of legal principle. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s Australia was gripped by a debate about race relations that was both controversial and multi-faceted, involving the rights of Aborigines, discrimination in Papua New Guinea (which Australia administered on behalf of the United Nations Trusteeship Council), and prohibition of non-European immigration.³¹ These matters exposed the Australian Government to international criticism that it wished to avoid, and as one critic of Australian foreign policy suggested, ‘it was largely in her membership of the Commonwealth that Australia revealed the racist prism through which she viewed international reality.’³²

In Australia, the socio-economic cleavage between whites and Aborigines was immense. Aboriginal living conditions were extremely poor: their ‘settlements’ were often adjacent to rubbish dumps and the shacks in which they lived lacked electricity and hygienic toilet

²⁹ J. D. B. Miller, *The Conduct of Australian Foreign Policy* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1969), p. 4.

³⁰ Paul Hasluck, *Sir Robert Menzies: A Life* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1980), p. 24.

³¹ Bruce Grant, *The crisis of loyalty, a study of Australian foreign policy* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1972), p. 37. For a detailed study of these various aspects of the race problem in Australia see Frank S. Stevens (ed.), *Racism: The Australian Experience* (New York: Taplinger, 3 Vols. 1971-1972). *Volume 1: Prejudice and Xenophobia*, examines the experience of migrants and Australian attitudes towards them. *Volume 2: Black Versus White*, discusses Australian treatment of Aborigines. *Volume 3: Colonialism*, analyses the effects of domestic prejudice and government policies on Australia’s external relations.

³² Joseph A. Camilleri, *An Introduction to Australian Foreign Policy* (Milton, Queensland: Jacaranda Press, 2nd edn., 1975), p. 26.

facilities.³³ Given these extremely basic living conditions it is not surprising that Aborigines suffered from high death and disease rates due to communicable diseases and Aboriginal infant mortality was far higher than among the white population.³⁴ Few Aborigines received any education beyond primary schooling, which severely restricted their opportunities for social improvement.³⁵ Paul Hasluck, who was a distinguished historian before he entered government service, professed his humanitarian concern for Aborigines.³⁶ As Minister for Territories (1951-64) he achieved little for them. The Aborigines Ordinance deprived them of rights of citizenship and made them wards of the Federal Government, but in 1953 people of mixed blood were exempted from the Ordinance, unless they were living in the manner of Aborigines or were under the age of 18 and subject to the Director of Native Affairs. As one Australian historian commented: 'It is a measure of how strongly racist Australian society still was, as well as of Hasluck's conservatism, that this measure at the time was considered a wonderful forward step by almost everybody'.³⁷ Really beneficial changes in the status of Aborigines took a long time. In 1962 Aborigines were enfranchised by the repeal of discriminatory provisions in

³³ K. R. Howe, *Race Relations: Australia and New Zealand, a comparative survey 1770s-1970s* (Wellington: Methuen, 1977), pp. 62-63.

³⁴ See Peter M. Moodie, 'The Health Disadvantages of Aborigines', in Stevens (ed.), *Racism*, Vol. 2, pp. 235-42.

³⁵ Howe, *Race Relations*, p. 64.

³⁶ In his account of his early years Hasluck recalled his interest in Aborigines from an anthropological perspective, which later developed into a political concern to achieve social justice for them. Paul Hasluck, *Mucking about: an autobiography* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1977), Ch. 17, 'Aborigines', pp. 202-27, and Ch. 22, 'Politics', pp. 267-87.

³⁷ Russel Ward, *The History of Australia: The Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 319.

the Federal Electoral Act.³⁸ In 1967 a referendum approved a proposal to amend the Constitution so that Aborigines would be counted as Australian citizens (though the margin in favour was lowest in those States that contained the highest proportion of Aborigines).³⁹ It was not until 1975 that an Anti-Discrimination Act was passed, which was followed in 1976 by the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act.⁴⁰ Between the 1950s and the 1970s, therefore, Aborigines experienced elements of continuity and change. On the one hand there was still a great deal of racial prejudice in white communities towards Aborigines, and Aborigines experienced little socio-economic improvement compared with rising standards of living among the population as a whole. On the other hand Aborigines enjoyed a theoretical legal equality, were subject to more sympathetic and constructive government policies, and were no longer prepared to tolerate a subservient position in Australian society.⁴¹

The status of Papua New Guinea also led to domestic and international criticism of the Australian Government. Until the 1960s the Australian Government regarded Papua New Guinea not as a colony, but as a territory, which created considerable vagueness about its future as either a fully independent state or a state within the Australian Federation.⁴² Paul Hasluck, the responsible Minister, came under increasing pressure from the United Nations to set a target date for independence but refused to be drawn into a specific

³⁸ Donald Denoon *et al*, *A History of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 386, n. 10. See also Colin M. Tatz, 'Aborigines: Law and Political Development', in Stevens (ed.), *Racism*, Vol. 2, pp. 97-109.

³⁹ Ward, *The History of Australia*, pp. 372-73.

⁴⁰ Denoon *et al*, *A History of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific*, p. 370.

⁴¹ Howe, *Race Relations*, p. 62.

⁴² Denoon *et al*, *A History of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific*, p. 399.

commitment.⁴³ Hasluck presided over many improvements in the provision of health care and education, encouraged indigenous people out of subsistence farming into the slowly growing cash economy, and implemented a rapid growth in local government.⁴⁴ However, many discriminatory practices, some of which were justified in paternalistic terms, were slow to disappear.⁴⁵ For example, the regulations that banned indigenous peoples from drinking alcohol were not repealed until 1962 (following recommendations from a UN committee).⁴⁶ Even after the Discriminatory Practices Ordinance of 1963 made many forms of discrimination illegal, there were still restrictions on natives of Papua New Guinea who wished to enter Australia.⁴⁷ The big questions surrounding the future of Papua New Guinea were tackled in the second half of the 1960s, partly as a result of pressure from indigenous people and partly due to savage criticism of government policy by Edward Gough Whitlam, the Leader of the Opposition. When a delegation of legislators from Papua New Guinea asked if they had a real option to join the Australian Federation, ‘the Australian Cabinet took fright at three million Melanesians crossing the Torres Strait to demand jobs, schools, pensions and other rights of citizens.

⁴³ Denoon *et al*, *A History of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific*, p. 347; Ward, *The History of Australia*, p. 319.

⁴⁴ Denoon *et al*, *A History of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific*, p. 347; Ward, *The History of Australia*, p. 319.

⁴⁵ See Edward P. Wolfers, ‘Trusteeship Without Trust: A Short History of Interracial Relations and the Law in Papua and New Guinea’, in Stevens (ed.), *Racism*, Vol. 3, especially pp. 116-27, which deals with the period 1951-1969.

⁴⁶ Denoon *et al*, *A History of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific*, p. 347; Wolfers, ‘Trusteeship Without Trust’, in Stevens (ed.), *Racism*, Vol. 3, p. 123.

⁴⁷ Denoon *et al*, *A History of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific*, p. 347; Wolfers, ‘Trusteeship Without Trust’, in Stevens (ed.), *Racism*, Vol. 3, p. 125.

Instead they resolved that Papua New Guinea's destiny was independence – eventually, after much economic development.⁴⁸

The restrictions on non-European immigration were known informally as the White Australia Policy.⁴⁹ Richard Casey, the Australian Minister for External Affairs (1951-60), wrote that the Australian Government was determined to avoid 'the formation of substantial minorities or pockets of people who do not fit into the pattern of the rest of the community.'⁵⁰ According to Casey and Menzies, the purpose of such a policy was to avoid the racial conflicts like those that existed in South Africa, the United States and Britain.⁵¹ The Australian historian Russel Ward suggested that the Colombo Plan – which exposed Australia to significant numbers of Asian and African students – had only a marginal impact on the recipient countries of South-East Asia but a major impact on Australia because it helped 'significantly to break down the racist sentiment which still sustained the White Australia Policy.'⁵² In 1960 the University of Melbourne produced a

⁴⁸ Denoon *et al*, *A History of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific*, pp. 399-400.

⁴⁹ For the origins and implementation of this policy see A. C. Palfreeman, 'The White Australia Policy', and A. T. Yarwood, 'Attitudes Towards Non European Migrants', in Stevens (ed.), *Racism*, Vol.1, pp. 136-44 and 145-55. For a conservative response to some of the arguments against restrictive immigration see John Ray, 'In Defence of Australia's Policy Towards Non-White Immigration', in Stevens (ed.), *Racism*, Vol. 3, pp. 233-39.

⁵⁰ Richard Gardiner Casey, *Friends and Neighbors* (East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1955), p. 123.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 125; and Menzies, *Afternoon Light*, pp. 201 and 225.

⁵² Ward, *The History of Australia*, p. 317. Ward suggests that greater tolerance was fostered by conditions of full employment in Australia and the fact that visiting foreign students returned to their countries of origin. The Colombo Plan for Co-operative Economic Development in South and Southeast Asia emerged from a meeting of Commonwealth ministers in Ceylon in 1950.

study that indicated a majority of the Australian public (55 per cent) was in favour of replacing the White Australia Policy of total exclusion with controlled, selective immigration from Asian and African countries.⁵³ Nevertheless, whilst public attitudes were beginning to change it is difficult to detect much sympathy in the Australian Government for a new direction in immigration policy. Menzies and the Australian Government were troubled by the Commonwealth debates about South Africa and Southern Rhodesia because they feared that they could potentially lead to Commonwealth discussion of racial problems and policies in Australia.⁵⁴ In his memoirs Menzies admitted: 'My colleagues and I were not unconscious of the dangers to our immigration policy inherent in the proposition that a matter *normally* one of domestic jurisdiction can become one of international jurisdiction if it excites criticism and hostilities in other lands.'⁵⁵

In New Zealand there was also racial tension, between whites and Maoris. The official position on race relations was that 'Maoris have a natural and legal right to full equality with all other New Zealanders.'⁵⁶ However, although Maoris were entitled to equal treatment they often fared badly compared with whites, as one commentator observed: 'Although Maoris do not face the same extremes of prejudice and poverty as Aborigines

⁵³ Immigration Reform Group, *Control or Colour Bar?* (University of Melbourne, 1960). Cited in Ward, *The History of Australia*, p. 318.

⁵⁴ T. B. Millar, *Australia's Foreign Policy* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1968), p. 152.

⁵⁵ Menzies, *Afternoon Light*, p. 193. This was a point that Australian officials also appreciated: see discussion below, pp. 185-87.

⁵⁶ 'Integration of Maori and Pakeha', Department of Maori Affairs (Wellington, 1962), in W. D. McIntyre and W. J. Gardner, *Speeches and Documents on New Zealand History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 438-41.

they can still appear to occupy something of an equivalent position to white society.⁵⁷ Their rates of child mortality were higher (though this was diminishing); they did not have the same access to high quality land that whites enjoyed; they attained lower standards of educational achievement (only 10 per cent of Maori boys gained a School Certificate, compared with 50 per cent of European males); they were poorly represented in the professions (just 8 per cent of Maoris compared with 40 per cent of the European workforce) and worked mainly as labourers (50 per cent of Maoris compared with 35 per cent of Europeans), which meant that they were more vulnerable in times of economic depression; and they were disproportionately likely to end up in prison (60 per cent of inmates were Maori, yet Maoris constituted just 8 per cent of the New Zealand population), which demonstrated Maori social dislocation.⁵⁸ Beneath these social indicators was ‘a thick underlay of privately (and less commonly publicly) expressed prejudice’ towards Maoris.⁵⁹ Unsurprisingly, Maori self-consciousness increased and they rejected the Government’s concept of integration, which was felt to be tantamount to assimilation.⁶⁰ There was little open racial conflict in New Zealand, which may be explained by the fact that Maoris adopted non-traditional methods of protest: they demonstrated, distributed literature, and used the news media to publicise racial discrimination.⁶¹ From the late 1960s Maori pressure began to produce changes in official thinking about race relations. The 1967 *Education Institute Report on Maori Education*,

⁵⁷ Howe, *Race Relations*, p. 73.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*; and Keith Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 271-72.

⁵⁹ Howe, *Race Relations*, p. 76.

⁶⁰ Graeme Dunstall, ‘The Social Pattern’, in Rice (ed.), *Oxford History of New Zealand*, pp. 477-78.

⁶¹ Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*, p. 272; Dunstall, ‘The Social Pattern’, in Rice (ed.), *Oxford History of New Zealand*, p. 479.

for example, declared: 'It must be remembered that the Maori is both a New Zealander and a Maori. He has an inalienable right to be both.'⁶²

Faced with an increasingly effective protest movement at home, the Government of New Zealand did not welcome developments in its external relations that added an additional dimension to domestic problems in New Zealand. In 1960 the issue of apartheid spilled over into a fundamental feature of New Zealand culture: sport. When the New Zealand Rugby Football Union excluded Maori from the All Blacks team that toured South Africa, it produced 'No Maori, No Tour' protests.⁶³ The New Zealand Government generally refused to take any action to discourage sporting contacts with South Africa but in 1965 the South African Government made it clear that it would be unacceptable to include Maori players in an All Blacks tour planned for 1967, the New Zealand Government did intervene. Keith Holyoake issued a statement declaring that the New Zealand Government regarded the principle of racial equality as basic to the New Zealand way of life and did not consider that New Zealand could 'as a nation be truly represented in any sphere by a group chosen on social lines.'⁶⁴ On that occasion the New Zealand Rugby Union cancelled the planned tour, which shows just how sensitive feelings were about race relations.⁶⁵ Similarly, the subject of Rhodesian independence also exposed the

⁶² Quoted in Ranginui J. Walker, 'Maori People since 1950', in Rice (ed.), *Oxford History of New Zealand*, p. 508.

⁶³ Denoon *et al*, *A History of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific*, p. 376.

⁶⁴ *New Zealand Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. XX No. 10 (October 1970), p. 84. Quoted in Kennaway, *New Zealand Foreign Policy*, p. 136.

⁶⁵ For a detailed study see Malcolm Templeton, *Human rights and sporting contacts: New Zealand attitudes to race relations in South Africa, 1921-94* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1998).

Government of New Zealand to scrutiny of its own handling of race relations issues, especially in the wake of UDI.⁶⁶

James Barber has observed that in the case of South Africa the Commonwealth had side-stepped a racial clash, but there was no prospect that it could do so over Rhodesia. Although the members of the Commonwealth ultimately agreed on the desirability of African majority rule in Rhodesia, throughout the 1960s they remained divided over the timetable and means by which to achieve this.⁶⁷ These divisions were evident not only in relations between the Old Commonwealth and the Afro-Asian members (which were articulated clearly during Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conferences), but also in routine diplomatic exchanges between the Old Commonwealth states. In order to understand these divisions – which are explored in the next chapter – it is first necessary to examine Canadian, Australian and New Zealand attitudes towards Rhodesia more closely.

The Old Commonwealth and Rhodesia

Canadian politicians felt sympathetic towards the aspirations of Africans in Rhodesia and were anxious to support Britain in its search for a reasonable settlement, but they were also conscious of the need to avoid alienating the European settlers lest this provoke a UDI, which might then precipitate the disintegration of the Commonwealth. Lester Pearson recalled in his memoirs that although the Canadian Government was entirely

⁶⁶ Bruce Brown, *New Zealand Foreign Policy in Retrospect* (Wellington: Institute of International Affairs, 1970), p. 43. Brown served as First Secretary in the New Zealand Mission to the United Nations (1963-67).

⁶⁷ Barber, 'The Impact of the Rhodesian Crisis on the Commonwealth', p. 86.

behind the African members of the Commonwealth on the issue of racial equality, 'it was quite impracticable to do some of the things they wanted, such as enforcing racial equality on Rhodesia by military action, if Rhodesian independence were declared unilaterally.'⁶⁸ Similarly, Paul Martin, the Secretary for External Affairs (1963-68), wrote that in the autumn of 1963 he had opposed African attempts to have the United Nations assume a greater role in the issue, but when Jack Howman, the Rhodesian Minister of Internal Affairs, visited Ottawa, Martin 'left him in no doubt that we were opposed to any plan that denied suffrage to Rhodesia's black majority.'⁶⁹ In a later meeting with a Rhodesian representative Martin also stressed the Commonwealth dimension in the Rhodesian problem, pointing out that:

The future of the Commonwealth is a matter of increasing concern to Canada, because of the implications for future relations between the West and the Afro-Asian nations if we fail to strengthen and develop the more and more tenuous bonds which now exist between its members.⁷⁰

Arnold Smith, who served as Assistant Under-Secretary for External Affairs in Ottawa (1963-65) before he became the first Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Secretariat, was convinced that 'for Britain to agree to the independence of any African

⁶⁸ Pearson, *Mike*, Vol. 3, p. 283.

⁶⁹ Martin, *A Very Public Life*, Vol. II, pp. 412-13. The official records of the visit by J. H. Howman to Ottawa in September 1963 are in the National Archives of Canada [hereafter NAC]: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR Part 1.1.

⁷⁰ NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR Part 1.1, 'Meeting between Mr Bennett (Southern Rhodesia) with Minister, March 17', Memorandum by R. E. Collins, African and Middle Eastern Division [hereafter AMED], Department of External Affairs [hereafter DEA], 18 March 1964, para. 3.

country on any other basis than actual majority rule was to invite conflict and disaster.⁷¹ The senior Canadian figures were therefore very much in accord when it came to dealing with the issue of Rhodesian independence.

At the official level the Canadian approach to the problem was sophisticated and thoroughly pragmatic. Officials in the Department of External Affairs distinguished subtle shades of opinion among Rhodesians, as one Canadian diplomat observed: ‘all white Rhodesians are not of one mind on the political situation, even though the “embattled minority” attitude is in all to a greater or lesser degree.’⁷² In conversations with Rhodesian Ministers Canadian officials took care to emphasise that Ottawa did not have a ‘doctrinaire approach’ to the problem of granting independence.⁷³ They advised Canadian politicians that it was unrealistic to suppose that Rhodesia could proceed directly to majority rule, though they also recognised that it was ‘equally unthinkable that the Africans will wait for fifteen years for majority rule to evolve under the present constitution.’⁷⁴ Canadian officials were careful not to alienate the Rhodesian Government because they feared the international implications of a UDI, particularly the prospect that UN sanctions might be extended to South Africa and the ramifications for

⁷¹ Arnold Smith, *Stitches in Time: The Commonwealth in World Politics* (New York: Beaufort Books, 1983), p. 26. For a brief discussion of the Commonwealth Secretariat see below, Ch. 5, pp. 282-84.

⁷² NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.2, J. C. Wood to T. Carter re: Visit of Air Vice Marshal Bentley, Southern Rhodesian Representative, British Embassy, Washington, 7 June 1965.

⁷³ NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, ‘Meeting with Mr J. H. Howman, Minister of Internal Affairs, for Southern Rhodesia’ [on 12 September 1963], Memorandum by R. G. Hatheway, AMED, DEA, 19 September 1963, para. 13.

⁷⁴ NAC: MG31-E47, Vol. 66, Brief for Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting, 26 June 1964, para. 6.

the Zambian economy.⁷⁵ Above all else, they were anxious to provide assistance to Britain in its efforts to deter a UDI and, if this failed, to support economic sanctions.⁷⁶ In this respect the attitude of Canadian officials was markedly different from that of Australian officials, who did not necessarily see the interests of Britain or the Commonwealth as coterminous with their own national interests.⁷⁷

During the 1950s and early 1960s, before Rhodesia's UDI, there were few pluralist pressures on the Canadian foreign policy establishment. Parliamentary discussion of foreign affairs was growing, but less than 20 per cent of members of the House of Commons had sufficient interest or expertise to contribute effectively to foreign policy debates, and there were very few instances where parliamentary opinion had any significant influence on the initiation, development and shaping of government policy.⁷⁸ Neither was the Canadian Government subject to any overwhelming pressures from the press, academic and professional experts, interest groups, or the general public in relation to foreign policy.⁷⁹ Thus, as one academic study commented: 'The hallmark of the Pearson era of Canadian foreign policy was a coherent but relatively closed approach to

⁷⁵ NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, 'Record of Discussion on Southern Rhodesia' [on 28 October 1964], by L. M. Berry, AMED, DEA, 30 October 1964, para. 4; MG31-E47, Vol. 66, Brief for Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting, 7 June 1965, p. 2. Unlike Australia and New Zealand, Canada was involved in the contingency planning to provide assistance to Zambia.

⁷⁶ NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, 'Record of Discussion on Southern Rhodesia' [on 28 October 1964], by L. M. Berry, AMED, DEA, 30 October 1964, para. 7.

⁷⁷ See next chapter for the development of this theme.

⁷⁸ Robert Barry Farrell, *The Making of Canadian Foreign Policy* (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall, 1969), pp. 148-49.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 71-76.

policymaking.⁸⁰ Canadian public opinion counted for very little in the formulation of foreign policy, provided that the Canadian Government respected the parameters of acceptable policies.⁸¹ A strong public reaction would only have been seen on the Rhodesian issue in the event that the Canadian Government deployed military forces to assist African nationalists, or endorsed the policies of the Rhodesian Government, neither of which were likely.⁸²

In contrast to Canada, there was considerable sympathy in Australia for the European settlers in Rhodesia. This was particularly evident in the Australian Government and civil service, and to a lesser extent among the Australian public. In October 1965 Sir Robert Menzies told the Australian Parliament:

[N]one of us would fail to understand something of the position of the European settlers, if I may so call them chiefly the British settlers, in Southern Rhodesia. They have made an enormous contribution to the

⁸⁰ Cooper, *Canadian Foreign Policy*, p. 41.

⁸¹ Farrell, *The Making of Canadian Foreign Policy*, p. 75. Farrell notes that from 1968 the Nigerian Civil War and the Vietnam War provoked some strong public reactions, which necessitated better communication between the Canadian Government and the Canadian people on foreign policy issues. *Ibid.*, p. 76. The role of interest groups and public opinion in the formulation of Canadian foreign policy received no notable discussion until the 1980s. See Elizabeth Riddell-Dixon, *The Domestic Mosaic: Domestic Groups and Canadian Foreign Policy* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 1985)

⁸² Matthews and Pratt, 'Canadian Policy Towards Southern Africa', in Anglin, Shaw and Widstrand (eds.), *Canada, Scandinavia and Southern Africa*, p. 170.

country. They have rights which everybody would want to protect. So the matter is not utterly simple.⁸³

In his memoirs Menzies explained why the matter was not ‘utterly simple’. He observed that although Africans consistently demanded ‘one man, one vote’, the emergence of one-party government in many newly independent African states negated universal suffrage. Further, he argued that ‘The right to vote should be approximately related to the capacity to vote ... The recent history of the Congo should be sufficient proof that a premature grant of self-government can lead to a great community disaster.’⁸⁴ Menzies acknowledged that it was impossible to perpetuate white minority rule indefinitely but suggested that the 1961 Constitution in Southern Rhodesia offered the prospect of majority rule once the African majority attained a sufficient level of economic and educational attainment.⁸⁵ Menzies’ interpretation of the situation was therefore very close to that of the Rhodesian Front, which maintained that the African majority was not barred from political advancement. However, although Menzies showed strong sympathy for the Europeans in Rhodesia he consistently advised against a UDI.⁸⁶ When they did take this step Menzies reluctantly announced that his Government had decided to apply sanctions, but explicitly ruled out Australian support for use of force.⁸⁷ This drew a

⁸³ *Parliamentary Debates* (Australian House of Representatives), 21 October 1965. Quoted in Glen St. J. Barclay, ‘Friends in Salisbury: Australia and the Rhodesian Unilateral Declaration of Independence, 1965-72’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (1983), p. 39.

⁸⁴ Menzies, *Afternoon Light*, pp. 190-91.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

⁸⁶ See next chapter for a discussion of Australian efforts to influence Rhodesia.

⁸⁷ National Archives of Australia [hereafter NAA]: A5828/1, Vol. 4, Cabinet Decision 1373, 12 November 1965; Cabinet Decision 1374, 16 November 1965; Cabinet Decision 1375, 16 November 1965; Summary of

stinging criticism from Edward Gough Whitlam, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who declared that it ‘completely undermines the use of sanctions if we say we will never resort to the ultimate sanction.’ Paul Hasluck, Minister for External Affairs (1964-66), condemned UDI as foolish but suggested that the Rhodesian Government had acted out of fear to preserve ‘something the Europeans thought precious to themselves’. Hasluck appealed for restraint and understanding: ‘Let us try to appreciate as part of the situation, the fact that the Europeans in Rhodesia do face a great difficulty ... For the time being and in the present situation we can see that the best hope is to support the Government of the United Kingdom.’⁸⁸ One commentator later wrote that Hasluck’s statement was ‘cautious, unemotional and utterly oblivious to the passions aroused by the issue.’⁸⁹

In the debates about UDI many prominent figures in the Australian House of Representatives went much further than Menzies and Hasluck in their expressions of support for Ian Smith’s regime, and questioned the wisdom of applying economic sanctions against Rhodesia. Sir Wilfred Kent Hughes, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, observed that Rhodesia was ‘not the only country in Africa that needs time to establish the principles of a more sophisticated democracy, as out of 35 or 36 new African nations only 5 allow any freedom of opposition to the ruler and his party ... it is a

a Statement on Rhodesia by Sir Robert Menzies, House of Representatives, 16 November 1965, *The Parliamentarian*, Vol. 47 No. 1 (January 1966), pp. 93-95. The Australian decision to apply sanctions is discussed further in the next chapter.

⁸⁸ *Parliamentary Debates* (Australian House of Representatives), 17 November 1965. Quoted in Glen St. J. Barclay, ‘Friends in Salisbury’, p. 40; and Richard V. Hall, ‘Australia and Rhodesia: Black Interests and White Lies’, in Stevens (ed.), *Racism*, Vol. 3, p. 178. Hall was Private Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition.

⁸⁹ Hall, ‘Australia and Rhodesia’, in Stevens (ed.), *Racism*, Vol. 3, p. 178.

sad moment for this Parliament when the Government feels it has to take the actions outlined by the Prime Minister.’ Charles E. Barnes, the Minister for Territories (1963-66), stated that ‘those of us who come from rural areas and who have rural associations, particularly, I think, must have a great deal of sympathy for those people in Rhodesia ... The great measure of prosperity that Rhodesia enjoys has been brought about by the efforts of many generations from the British Isles.’⁹⁰ Denis James Killen, the Government’s Deputy Whip in the House, was by far the most vociferous supporter of the Europeans in Rhodesia. In May 1965 he tabled a parliamentary question asking Menzies to confirm that he would oppose efforts to debate the Rhodesian issue at the forthcoming Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Conference (which hardly seemed necessary given that Menzies had always maintained that it was not a matter for Commonwealth scrutiny).⁹¹ In September 1965, just before Britain and Rhodesia were about to enter another round of negotiations, Killen enquired whether the Australian Government would be willing to send a parliamentary delegation and accredited journalists to Rhodesia, with a view to obtaining ‘a more particular understanding of Rhodesian difficulties’.⁹² Later, during the parliamentary debates after UDI, Killen made his position perfectly clear: he claimed that

⁹⁰ *Parliamentary Debates* (Australian House of Representatives), 17 November 1965. Quoted in Glen St. J. Barclay, ‘Friends in Salisbury’, p. 40.

⁹¹ NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 4, DEA to Australian High Commission, London, Cable No. 2339, 14 May 1965.

⁹² NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 5, Question Without Notice – House of Representatives (16 September 1965), 17 September 1965. Paul Hasluck replied that the Australian Government took the view that the issue of Rhodesian independence was a matter between the Governments of Britain and Rhodesia, but it might be useful to send a parliamentary delegation to Africa, not Rhodesia only. Hasluck suggested that such a delegation would be more likely to gain access to officials and politicians if journalists did not accompany MPs.

the Labor Opposition had its facts wrong; drew attention to African violence in Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania and Rwanda; described the nationalist Patriotic Front as a terrorist organisation that did ‘not stop at murder’; and concluded that the Rhodesian cause was ‘greatly misunderstood’.⁹³ Killen later wrote that in Rhodesia ‘a mere handful of Europeans are valiantly striving to maintain standards against tremendous odds ... The fact that Rhodesia’s efforts provide the only hope for a multi-racial society in the whole of the African continent is studiously ignored.’⁹⁴ Killen was also associated with Eric Butler and the Australian League of Rights, which brought Killen into disrepute. In November 1965 the Opposition alleged that Killen had passed information about Cabinet views to Butler, who had in turn written to the Rhodesian Government advising that ‘the Australian Cabinet was divided 50-50 on the wisdom of the Government’s sanctions against Rhodesia.’⁹⁵ Whether or not the allegation was true, it nevertheless indicated a perception that there were some in the Liberal Government who were unhappy with Australian policy towards Rhodesia. Over the course of the next few years a ‘Rhodesia Lobby’ was discernible in the House and the Senate, distinguished by its ‘White Anglo-Saxon Protestant solidarity, a hankering for the lost Empire, a deep suspicion of black regimes who rejected the deserving whites and a feeling that communism lurks behind most critical thinking’.⁹⁶

⁹³ *Parliamentary Debates* (Australian House of Representatives), 17 November 1965. Quoted in Glen St. J. Barclay, ‘Friends in Salisbury’, p. 40.

⁹⁴ Denis James Killen, ‘The Traducers’, *Australian International News Review*, 23 November 1965. Quoted in Barclay, ‘Friends in Salisbury’, p. 41.

⁹⁵ *Parliamentary Debates* (Australian House of Representatives), 23 November 1965. Quoted in Barclay, ‘Friends in Salisbury’, p. 41.

⁹⁶ Hall, ‘Australia and Rhodesia’, in Stevens (ed.), *Racism*, Vol. 3, p. 178.

Officials in the Australian Department for External Affairs took a less emotional view of the Rhodesian problem than their political masters did, though this did not preclude them from expressing pro-Rhodesian views. They recognised that the issue was multifaceted and could potentially hurt Australian interests in several ways. First, it was a Commonwealth problem; if Rhodesia became independent in circumstances short of African majority rule it would not be recognised as a member of the Commonwealth and sanctions would be imposed, to which Australia would have to adhere. Second, it was a United Nations problem; because Australia was a member of the Committee of Twenty-Four (the UN's Special Committee on Colonialism) it had become involved in the search for a solution in Rhodesia, and in the event of UN intervention Australia might have to bear some of the costs. Third, it was a problem of decolonisation; Australian officials noted that 'As an administering power in New Guinea, we wish to appear to African and Asian countries as enlightened and reasonably progressive.' Fourth, it was an international problem; officials anticipated that failure to find a solution could lead to a general conflict in Southern Africa that would be exploited by the Communist bloc. Fifth, it was a problem of race relations; officials warned that:

Failure in Southern Rhodesia would hasten the drift towards an irrevocable cleavage between black and white leading to race war in Africa. As a country of European settlement practicing a discriminatory immigration policy, and desiring Asian goodwill, Australia has reason to fear any inflammation of the racial issue.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 2 and Part 3a, Briefs prepared for Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, [n.d. but April 1964].

Despite these concerns about the damage that a UDI could inflict on Australia's international reputation, there was some sympathy for the Rhodesian settlers among Australian diplomats, and even apathy in some official quarters about the prospect of a UDI. In October 1965 Sir Laurence McIntyre, a very senior official, argued that whilst it was desirable not to antagonise Afro-Asian opinion: 'Our general policy should not be to victimise the Rhodesians.'⁹⁸ J. C. G. Kevin, the Australian Ambassador to South Africa, also counselled the Department of External Affairs to take a cautious approach towards the Rhodesian problem. Kevin argued that there was little that could be done to influence the Rhodesian Government, and suggested that the danger to the Commonwealth posed by a UDI had been much exaggerated.⁹⁹ Kevin felt that in negotiations with Ian Smith, the British Government adopted a position that was too rigid, and after UDI he argued that there was a divergence between Australian interests and British policy.¹⁰⁰ Kevin observed – with evident distaste for principles of racial equality – that 'demographic forecasts being what they are and some Asian thinking being what it is, we in Australia may not be left alone in the future' and lamented that if Rhodesia, the Portuguese territories and South Africa were 'forced radically to dismantle and rebuild their social

⁹⁸ NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 5, McIntyre, Acting Secretary, to Hasluck, Minister for External Affairs, 19 October 1965. McIntyre later became Australia's Chief of Mission at the United Nations.

⁹⁹ NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 4, 'Southern Rhodesia: Mr Martin's Message', Memorandum by J. C. G. Kevin, 25 February 1965.

¹⁰⁰ NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 5, Kevin, Pretoria, to DEA, Canberra, Cable No. 170, 15 October 1965, *passim*; A1838, 190/10/1, Part 7, Kevin, Pretoria, to DEA, Canberra, Savingram 65/65, 17 December 1965, para 3. Kevin's point about the divergence of British and Australian interests is examined further in the next chapter. Kevin's view that the British had mishandled negotiations was strongly challenged by the Australian High Commission in London. See A1838, 935/9/5, Part 9, A. J. Eastman, Senior External Affairs Representative, to DEA, Canberra, Cable No. 9138, 22 October 1965.

and constitutional structure, we shall be the only survivor.’¹⁰¹ On the basis of such evidence it may be argued that official advice tended to compound the natural dispositions of Australian ministers on the issue of Rhodesian independence.

For the most part, the Australian public did not exhibit much interest in the Rhodesian problem, at least until the 1970s when the debate about domestic racial discrimination became louder, which tended to accentuate foreign policy issues involving race. The Australian press, which cared little about Africa in general, devoted no sustained attention to Rhodesia but generally condemned UDI. The only consistent supporters of the Smith regime were regional newspapers such as the *Burnie Advocate* (Tasmania), the *West Coast Sentinel* (South Australia), and the *South Burnett Times* (Queensland). The last two were in areas where there was strong support for the right-wing League of Rights.¹⁰² The League was a small but vocal organisation that had expressed its unequivocal support for Europeans in Southern Rhodesia for many years, even before the break up of the Central African Federation. In 1961 Eric D. Butler, an associate of Denis Killen and the National Director of the Australian League of Rights, described the Rhodesian settlers as ‘an inspiring example of the dedicated few’.¹⁰³ As creeping sanctions were introduced in the months after UDI, there were some indications of Australian public sympathy towards Rhodesia. Rhodesian-Australian Associations were formed in Victoria, New South

¹⁰¹ NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 7, Kevin, Pretoria, to DEA, Canberra, Savingram 65/65, 17 December 1965, para. 5.

¹⁰² Hall, ‘Australia and Rhodesia’, in Stevens (ed.), *Racism*, Vol. 3, p. 183. The League advocated Christian principles, was fervently monarchist, and strongly anti-communist. Some of its members were also white supremacists and anti-Semitic.

¹⁰³ Quoted in St. J. Barclay, ‘Friends in Salisbury’, p. 41. The Australian League of Rights was formed in 1960 from a number of regional associations.

Wales, South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland, and in March 1966 the Australian League of Rights sponsored the sanctions-busting Petrol for Rhodesia Fund. There was some degree of overlap with Liberal Party membership, especially in New South Wales, but the Rhodesian-Australian Associations were not really successful in involving prominent national political figures in their activities. The Associations consisted of three discernible groups: older Australians, who were nostalgic for the days of the British Empire; right-wing activists, who also belonged to the League of Rights; and émigré South Africans and Rhodesians. However, the extent of Australian public support for Rhodesia should not be overstated: the largest attendance reported at a meeting was 250 in Sydney and the membership of the Associations probably numbered only in the low thousands.¹⁰⁴

In New Zealand there was a similar pattern of political, official, and public opinion on the Rhodesian issue to that which existed in Australia. Keith Holyoake privately sympathised with the European settlers in Rhodesia. In July 1964 he told the Rhodesian Minister Clifford Dupont that ‘he wished to help the Europeans in Southern Rhodesia in whatever way he could’, and in October 1965 he wrote to Ian Smith expressing his admiration for the European settlers ‘who ha[d] by their own special skills and industry established a prosperous and highly developed society.’¹⁰⁵ Publicly, however, Holyoake

¹⁰⁴ Hall, ‘Australia and Rhodesia’, in Stevens (ed.), *Racism*, Vol. 3, pp. 183-84. Hall’s analysis is based upon the periodical *Rhodesian Commentary*, published by the Rhodesia Information Centre in Sydney. In 1972 documents leaked into the public domain that showed it was really an undercover diplomatic mission of the Rhodesian Government. The Centre remained open despite public controversy about its activities, which contravened the provisions of Resolutions passed by the UN Security Council. *Ibid.*, pp. 184-85.

¹⁰⁵ Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga, Wellington Office [hereafter ANZ]: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 9, ‘Southern Rhodesia: Record of a Discussion between Mr Holyoake, and Mr

was keen to minimise New Zealand's involvement in the issue of Rhodesian independence. In August 1964 Holyoake reported to the House of Representatives that at the recent Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting he had reaffirmed his Government's support for the principle of majority rule in Rhodesia, but had recognised that the independence issue was a matter between the Governments of Britain and Rhodesia.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, this was the position that Holyoake maintained throughout the Rhodesian Crisis, up to and beyond UDI.¹⁰⁷ This position partly reflected Holyoake's style of leadership, 'the slowing down of every process which, if speedily dealt with, might have represented change and political harm.'¹⁰⁸ More significantly, it also reflected the Government's perception that little was at stake for New Zealand, as Malcolm McKinnon has commented: 'Kinship was the only interest "aligning" New Zealand with Rhodesia. Over Rhodesia a major crisis was avoided, because while New Zealand sentiment was involved, New Zealand interests were plainly less so.'¹⁰⁹ Officials in the Department of External Affairs certainly recognised that New Zealand's economic interests in Rhodesia were extremely limited.¹¹⁰ On the other hand, officials were also aware that the issue of

Dupont', 11 July 1964; ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 13, Message from Keith Holyoake to Ian Smith, DEA to New Zealand High Commission, London, Cable No. 3155, 5 October 1965.

¹⁰⁶ See Summary of a Statement on the 1964 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference by Keith Holyoake, House of Representatives, 6 August 1964, *Journal of the Parliaments of the Commonwealth*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (October 1964), pp. 438-43.

¹⁰⁷ See next chapter for the role of New Zealand in the search for a diplomatic settlement.

¹⁰⁸ Robert Chapman, 'From Labour to National', in Rice (ed.), *Oxford History of New Zealand*, p. 381.

¹⁰⁹ McKinnon, *Independence and Foreign Policy*, p. 238.

¹¹⁰ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 11, DEA, Wellington, to Malcolm Templeton, Counsellor, High Commission, London, Letter, 27 January 1965. This issue is discussed further in the next chapter: New Zealand's limited economic interests in Rhodesia diminished its capacity to exert influence over the Rhodesian Government, but its reluctance to impose sanctions drew criticism from the Commonwealth.

Rhodesian independence had ‘profound implications for race relations throughout the world and especially within the Commonwealth’, and they were ‘conscious of the need to avoid damaging the reputation which New Zealand has earned for having promoted harmonious race relations in its own community and for having brought Western Samoa to independence in a way which evoked international approbation.’ It was nevertheless observed that these concerns should not lead the New Zealand Government into a position where support for Afro-Asian proposals went beyond what was ‘prudent and expedient’, and it was suggested that the Rhodesian question should be considered ‘in an impartial way’, which meant that the New Zealand Government should avoid giving the impression that it was ‘merely acting in support of the British Government.’¹¹¹ This evidence indicates that New Zealand officials had very similar concerns to their Australian counterparts.

The New Zealand Government adopted, as far as possible, a ‘hands off’ policy on Rhodesia, but this did not necessarily accord with the attitudes of some among the wider political establishment and the public. When the Rhodesian Government held its *indaba* in October 1964, a British newspaper reported: ‘Among the small audience, the only people who appeared to have been impressed with the proceedings were a small group of visiting New Zealand MPs, who said afterwards that this was the way they consulted the Maori chiefs in their own country.’¹¹² The press in Rhodesia and New Zealand widely

¹¹¹ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 9, ‘Southern Rhodesia: International Developments and New Zealand Policy’, Brief for Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Conference, London, 8-15 July 1964, Annex 1, p. 1.

¹¹² ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 10, Malcolm Templeton, Counsellor, High Commission, London, to DEA, Letter, 3 November 1964, enclosing a copy of an article by Ronald Legge, ‘The smoke signals were meaningless at the indaba’, *Sunday Times*, 1 November 1964.

reported the favourable comments of the New Zealand MPs, which prompted Arnold Nordemeyer, the Leader of the Opposition, to question whether their views were representative of the New Zealand Government's position.¹¹³ Press comment in New Zealand certainly revealed a strong current of support for the Europeans in Rhodesia. The *Daily News* defended them as 'loyal Britons who believe that Britain has stabbed them in the back. Eighty years of effort will be dust and ashes if the African takes over.'¹¹⁴ The *Dominion* showed a similar concern, arguing that it was easy to lose sight of the 'legitimate claims of the white Rhodesians and to ignore their plight', and the *Auckland Star*, which was critical of Ian Smith, received letters expressing support for the Rhodesian Front leader.¹¹⁵ Pro-Rhodesian views were particularly strong in rural New Zealand, especially in areas where the Social Credit League was campaigning hard in the run up to the 1966 election, of which the New Zealand Government had to take account.¹¹⁶ Shortly before UDI the Mayor of Dargaville – who in early 1966 became Chairman of the New Zealand-Rhodesian Society – wrote to Holyoake that it would be a 'terrible thing for New Zealand to be a party to such inhuman treatment of white settlers by handing the country over to Communist inspired trouble makers. Contrary to reports

¹¹³ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 10, Malcolm Templeton, Counsellor, High Commission, London, to DEA, Letter, 4 November 1964; and various documents *passim*.

¹¹⁴ *Daily News*, Taranaki, 12 October 1965. Quoted in McKinnon, *Independence and Foreign Policy*, p. 236.

¹¹⁵ The *Dominion*, 28 October 1965; *Auckland Star*, 13 October 1965. Quoted in McKinnon, *Independence and Foreign Policy*, p. 236.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* The Social Credit League was created in 1953 out of the Social Credit Association, a pressure group, but did not win its first parliamentary seat until 1966. Chapman, 'From Labour to National', in Rice (ed.), *Oxford History of New Zealand*, pp. 376-77.

the 4 million Africans are supporting Premier Smith and his Government.’¹¹⁷ As the Rhodesian crisis became more acute in the weeks after UDI, the Department of External Affairs advised its overseas posts that in New Zealand there was a ‘substantial body of opinion which supports the policies and objectives of the Smith regime’.¹¹⁸ Such evidence tends to suggest that in New Zealand public interest in the Rhodesian problem and sympathy for the European settlers was probably greater than in Australia.

Conclusion

The fact that Canada demonstrated a much more positive attitude towards the Commonwealth than either Australia or New Zealand can be explained partly by their different conceptions of the Commonwealth, partly by their different diplomatic styles and objectives in international politics, and most significantly by their different attitude to race relations. Canada felt less vulnerable than Australia or New Zealand to charges of racialism, which dominated Commonwealth relations in the 1960s, and therefore found it easier to engage with Afro-Asian members of the Commonwealth. In Australia and New Zealand there was considerable sympathy for Rhodesian ‘kith and kin’, which permeated the government, the civil service, and the public, but such sympathy was not evident in Canada. This explains why Australia and New Zealand were less willing than Canada to be drawn into the search for a solution to the problem of Rhodesian independence, which is explored in the next chapter.

¹¹⁷ S. Green to K. Holyoake, 12 October 1965. Quoted in McKinnon, *Independence and Foreign Policy*, p. 236.

¹¹⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 237.

Chapter Four

The Old Commonwealth: Consultation and Cooperation

During the Rhodesian Crisis

Introduction

The Old Commonwealth, like the United States, was concerned with two major dimensions of the Rhodesian problem: first, what assistance could be given to Britain to prevent a UDI; and second, what measures would have to be implemented in the event of a UDI. This chapter will examine the attempts of Canada, Australia and New Zealand to prevent a UDI from both a positive perspective (through offers of aid and technical assistance, and proposals for constitutional development), and a negative perspective (warning Rhodesia of the consequences of unilateral action). It will be argued that their attempts to influence Rhodesia were hindered by several factors. First, both Winston Field and Ian Smith were unwilling to countenance any Commonwealth advice that could be construed as interference in Rhodesian constitutional affairs. Second, the deterrent efforts of Canada, Australia and New Zealand were not coordinated and lacked credibility. Third, Old Commonwealth influence was restricted by the fact that Canadian and Australian diplomatic representation in Salisbury was limited, and in the case of New Zealand it was non-existent. In addition to their 'carrot and stick' diplomacy, the Old Commonwealth also recognised the need to formulate contingency plans to be implemented in the event of a UDI, which seemed increasingly likely with the failure of each round of negotiations between Britain and Rhodesia. The Old Commonwealth intended to follow Britain's lead after a UDI, but the slow pace of British contingency

planning inhibited preparations in the Old Commonwealth. The Old Commonwealth, like the United States, therefore became irritated with the British during the Rhodesian Crisis.

Winning friends and influencing people

Aid and technical assistance

In the preceding chapter it was noted that Canada adopted a much more positive attitude than Australia and New Zealand towards Commonwealth relations in general and the Rhodesian problem in particular. The following discussion will explain why the Commonwealth was a significant element in Canadian foreign policy and examine the reasons for a massive increase in the level of Canadian foreign aid during the mid-1960s, which included greater levels of assistance for Commonwealth states in Africa. Although Rhodesia was not an independent member of the Commonwealth, the Canadian Government nevertheless put forward practical proposals for aid and technical assistance programmes for Rhodesia, which were intended to improve the socio-economic status of Africans and prepare them for majority rule. With greater enthusiasm on the part of Australia and New Zealand, these programmes might have encouraged greater cooperation between Africans and Europeans in Rhodesia, and could have changed attitudes towards the Commonwealth among European Rhodesians (though it must be admitted that it would have been difficult to overcome intransigence among many African nationalists and extremist Europeans).

In a 1966 assessment, British officials recognised that although the Commonwealth was not the only or even the most important factor in Canadian foreign policy, 'there can be

no doubt that the present Canadian Government attach a good deal of importance to it, in word and deed.’¹ Canadian politicians emphasised the multi-racial nature of the Commonwealth, as noted in the preceding chapter, but the principle of racial equality was not the only reason why Canada valued the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth was an association through which Canada could exert influence, a forum that suited the principles of Canadian foreign policy and character of Canadian diplomacy. During the post-War period Canada obviously lacked the formidable capabilities of the great powers, but in the words of one historian it acquired a distinguished reputation as ‘the industrious tailor of the international system, stitching together workable compromises out of rather patternless and (often) threadbare material.’² Canada conceived its role in the international system as a problem-solver, a system maintainer rather than a system reformer. In other words, Canadian politicians and officials did not seek to make changes to the international system, but attempted to deal with the difficulties relating to the workings of the system as it stood.³ Canadian foreign policy was characterised by functionalist principles, particularly the idea that ‘responsibility in selected areas of international organization should be commensurate with specialized interests and task-

¹ The National Archives [hereafter TNA]: Public Records Office, Kew [hereafter PRO], DO 193/79, Eleanor J. Emery, Counsellor, British High Commission, Canada, to R. Walker, Commonwealth Relations Office [hereafter CRO], London, 1 December 1966, para. 2; in S. R. Ashton and Wm. Roger Louis (eds.), *British Documents on the End of Empire Project* [hereafter *BDEEP*] *Series A Volume 5, East of Suez and the Commonwealth, Part II: Europe, Rhodesia, Commonwealth* (London: The Stationery Office, 2004), p. 355.

² Andrew F. Cooper, *Canadian Foreign Policy: Old Habits and New Directions* (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall, 1997), p. 36.

³ *Ibid.* For a discussion of national roles see K. J. Holsti, ‘National roles conceptions in the study of foreign policy’, *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (September 1970), pp. 233-309.

related experience.⁴ Canada maintained its credibility by not over-extending itself, instead choosing to focus on specific issues that it felt competent to deal with. This meant concentrating on trying to mediate intra-bloc tensions (such as those that occurred during the 1956 Suez Crisis) rather than inter-bloc tensions (that is to say, East-West relations during the Cold War).⁵ A notable attribute of Canadian diplomacy was its associational activity, through which a habit of consultation and collaboration were thoroughly inculcated in the Canadian diplomatic service. Canada concentrated on working with others, as the Canadian diplomat and academic John Holmes put it: ‘Diplomacy ... is a game of skill in which countries without adequate weight to be decisive in world politics and economics play whatever hands they can muster. To do so they need more friends than enemies.’⁶ The Commonwealth was (at least in theory) an association of friends, in which Canada enjoyed a prestigious position, as British officials observed: ‘Canada (unlike Britain) has no imperialist past to inhibit her relations with the new Commonwealth countries. She sees herself, therefore, and the African countries in particular see her, as having a leading role to play in Commonwealth affairs.’⁷ A further

⁴ Cooper, *Canadian Foreign Policy*, p. 36. For a discussion of functionalism see John W. Holmes, *The Shaping of Peace: Canada and the Search for World Order* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), Vol. 1, pp. 29-73. Holmes was President of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs and had previously served in the Canadian Foreign Service.

⁵ Cooper, *Canadian Foreign Policy*, pp. 37-39.

⁶ John W. Holmes, ‘The changing role of the diplomatic function in the making of foreign policy’, Occasional Paper, Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, Department of Political Science, Dalhousie University (January 1975), p. 10. Quoted in Cooper, *Canadian Foreign Policy*, p. 37.

⁷ TNA: PRO, DO 193/79, Emery to Walker, 1 December 1966, para.6; in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, p. 356. Bruce Miller suggests that there was ‘something synthetic about Canada’s role in the 1950s and 1960s.’ Canada could and did capitalise on the fact that it had no imperialist association with Africa but ‘this was to a large extent an operation at the edges of national concern.’ It did

notable characteristic of Canadian diplomacy was its tenacity, which was evident in ‘both an entrepreneurial and technical dimension’. In an entrepreneurial role Canadian diplomats were responsible for ‘triggering initiatives; the planning and convening of meetings, setting priorities, and drawing up and fleshing out proposals’, and on the technical side they were involved with ‘a wide range of more routine activity surrounding liaison efforts, shuttle diplomacy, the use of formal and informal forums, working the corridors, and other means to push a given process forward.’⁸ The United Nations General Assembly and Security Council were obviously important arenas for pursuing entrepreneurial initiatives and routine diplomatic work, but Canada valued the Commonwealth as a channel of communication because its meetings were held *in camera* and as they were less subject to scrutiny it encouraged greater candour.⁹ As this chapter will demonstrate, Canadian politicians and officials used different diplomatic techniques in their attempts to contribute to the management of the Rhodesian problem. One initiative, which was routine but nevertheless potentially significant, was the Canadian attempt to mobilise the support of the Old Commonwealth for aid and technical assistance programmes in Rhodesia, which reflected growing Canadian expertise in and commitment to overseas aid.

not address the major questions of U.S. influence or national unity. J. D. B. Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of Expansion and Attrition 1953-1969* (London: Oxford University Press for The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1974), pp. 371-72.

⁸ Cooper, *Canadian Foreign Policy*, p. 38.

⁹ K. A. MacKirdy, ‘The Commonwealth: Does it Exist?’, in J. L. Granatstein (ed.), *Canadian Foreign Policy Since 1945: Middle Power or Satellite?* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1970), p. 167. However, many African Commonwealth states were inclined to use Prime Ministers’ Meetings as a forum for public diplomacy, which irritated the Prime Ministers of Britain and Australia. See the next chapter for further discussion of this point.

In his March 1964 statement to the first United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Canadian Foreign Minister, Paul Martin, stated his Government's view that the economic and social life of developing countries 'is strengthened by the function which outside assistance performs and by the evidence which it brings of widespread interests, sympathy and support.' Martin explained that was why the Canadian Government actively encouraged UN assistance programmes and had decided to increase its economic aid in the year ahead by more than 50 per cent, to between \$180 and \$190 million.¹⁰ Speaking to an audience in Quebec in February 1965, Martin explained the motives behind foreign aid, highlighting humanitarianism in particular:

For my own part, I have no hesitation in saying that I regard humanitarian considerations to be foremost in the minds of those who have supported and sustained the principle of Canadian aid to the developing countries ... In essence I would say [the humanitarian approach] rests upon the recognition that, as flagrant disparities in human wealth and human welfare are no longer morally acceptable within a single community, whether it be local or national, the same principle is applicable to the larger world community.¹¹

¹⁰ Costas Melakopides, *Pragmatic Idealism: Canadian Foreign Policy 1945-1995* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), p. 77. UNCTAD set a target for developed countries to donate one per cent of their GNP to developing countries annually by 1972. In 1966 Canadian aid was around 0.45 per cent of GNP. TNA: PRO, DO 193/79, Emery to Walker, 1 December 1966, paras. 5, 10 (f) and (g); in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, pp. 356 and 358-59.

¹¹ Paul Martin, *Paul Martin Speaks for Canada: A Selection of Speeches on Foreign Policy, 1964-1967* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), p. 132. Also quoted in Melakopides, *Pragmatic Idealism*, p. 77.

Of course, this moral dimension was not the only motive behind foreign aid. Martin observed that Canada also benefited in several ways: first, Canadian economic growth was stimulated ‘by contributing to the level of production, exports and employment’; second, ‘Canadian producers, engineers and educators’ could ‘gain valuable experience’ whilst promoting Canadian products and skills; third, it enlarged Canadian horizons and Canada’s image abroad was ‘more clearly projected’; and fourth, the use of Canadian goods and services gave Canadians a stake in foreign aid, which ‘helped to enlist and maintain public support in Canada for an expanding aid programme.’¹²

Between 1964 and 1967 the level of Canadian aid rose by 280 per cent, reaching a total of \$307 million in 1966-67.¹³ Canadian aid was distributed in a variety of ways and to many different regions including South East Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. Bilateral aid accounted for over 70 per cent of Canada’s total effort, such as disbursements to Francophone states in Africa, which amounted to \$11 million in 1966-67.¹⁴ However, Canada was keen to coordinate her aid with other donors, which was effected through several multilateral schemes, including the Inter-American Development Bank, the International Development Association, the UN Development Programme, the Colombo Plan, the Commonwealth Caribbean Aid Programme, and the Special Commonwealth

¹² Martin, *Paul Martin Speaks for Canada*, pp. 134-35. Also quoted in Melakopides, *Pragmatic Idealism*, p. 78.

¹³ Department of External Affairs [hereafter DEA], External Aid Office, *Annual Review 1966-67*, p. 3. Figures cited in Melakopides, *Pragmatic Idealism*, pp. 78 and 80.

¹⁴ DEA, External Aid Office, *Annual Review 1966-67*, p. 9. Figures cited in Melakopides, *Pragmatic Idealism*, p. 78; and TNA: PRO, DO 193/79, Emery to Walker, 1 December 1966, paras. 10 (f) and (g); in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, pp. 358-59.

African Assistance Plan (SCAAP).¹⁵ Canadian aid to Commonwealth states in Africa increased dramatically, from \$3.5 million in 1961-62 to \$11 million in 1964-65 and \$18.5 million in 1966-67, of which the major recipients were Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda.¹⁶ Of course, these figures were a mere fraction of Britain's aid efforts in Africa,¹⁷ but as an imperial power Britain's commitments and responsibility in the region were far greater than those of Canada, whose role was seen as complementary to the part played by Britain.¹⁸ It may be argued that the level of Canadian aid in Africa was sufficient to demonstrate that Canada's stated humanitarian concerns were not mere rhetoric. Similarly, Canadian proposals for aid and technical assistance in Rhodesia, which were quietly pursued through regular diplomatic channels, indicated that Canada had a genuine concern about the situation there and a positive approach to tackling the problem.

Rhodesia was not under-developed by comparison with most states in Africa, but its pattern of development had obviously favoured the European minority in terms of distribution of wealth, education, and professional training. Consequently, the African majority lacked the level of education and skills that were necessary to assume responsibility for self-government. Educated African Rhodesians were of course mindful

¹⁵ Melakopides, *Pragmatic Idealism*, pp. 78-80; and TNA: PRO, DO 193/79, Emery to Walker, 1 December 1966, paras. 8 (f) and (g); in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, pp. 358-59.

¹⁶ External Aid Office, Ottawa, *Annual Review 1966-67*, pp. 7 and 24. Figures cited in Melakopides, *Pragmatic Idealism*, p. 80.

¹⁷ See Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part III: Dependent Territories, Africa, Economics, Race*, Ch. 13, 'Aid and Trade', pp. 431-546.

¹⁸ TNA: PRO, DO 193/79, Emery to Walker, 1 December 1966, para. 10 (a); in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, p. 357.

of the problem and discussed it with the Canadian Government even before the break up of the Central African Federation. Dr Bernard Chidzero, a Rhodesian who was head of the United Nations Office in Nairobi, told one Canadian diplomat of his fear that in the event of African majority rule in Rhodesia many Europeans would resign from the civil service, which would cause a crisis in government unless sufficient numbers of trained Africans were available.¹⁹ George Nyandoro, Secretary-General of the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union, also shared these concerns. He observed that whereas British civil servants had administered most British colonies in Africa, by contrast European settlers had administered Rhodesia. Nyandoro therefore anticipated that European settlers would deliberately intrigue against an African majority government, causing administrative collapse.²⁰ At the same time that the Canadian Government was receiving reports of African concerns about the lack of education and training opportunities in Rhodesia, it was also pursuing the issue with the Rhodesian Government. Canadian officials and ministers questioned whether the Rhodesian Government might do more to facilitate African educational advancement so that more Africans would then be enfranchised. Jack Howman, the Rhodesian Minister of Internal Affairs, explained that the Rhodesian Government had so far concentrated on providing elementary education to the majority of African children, and having achieved its goal the Government intended to expand facilities for secondary education. Faster progress to African majority rule would

¹⁹ National Archives of Canada, Ottawa [hereafter NAC]: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, N. F. H. Berlis, Canadian High Commissioner, Dar Es Salaam, to Director General, External Aid Office, Ottawa, Letter, 17 September 1963, para. 2.

²⁰ NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, George B. Nyandoro, London, to George Ivan Smith, Head of United Nations Office, Dar Es Salaam, 12 September 1963. Extract enclosed in Berlis to Director General, External Aid Office, Ottawa, Letter, 17 September 1963.

depend upon increased foreign investment in Rhodesia to provide the funds for the development of educational facilities.²¹

Over the next few months, the Canadian Government considered what it might do to assist African development in Rhodesia. In March 1964 Paul Martin met with Oliver Bennett, who emphasised that it was important for the United States, Britain, and the Commonwealth to provide educational and economic assistance to Rhodesia in order to accelerate African participation in government. According to Bennett both forms of assistance were necessary otherwise an educational programme would produce an additional problem of unemployment among qualified Africans. Martin told Bennett that the Canadian Government was prepared to offer technical assistance but questioned the necessity for large-scale financial aid, as ‘it was his impression that Southern Rhodesia, at least in African terms, had a relatively prosperous economy.’²² The following month the Canadian Government made a formal offer to provide three Canadian teachers for African schools in Rhodesia and two technical assistance advisers, and up to 25 places for Rhodesian Africans to train in Canada. Thomas Carter, the Canadian official who conveyed the offer to Salisbury, reported that the Rhodesian Government was grateful for the technical assistance programme, which it considered ‘a useful way of demonstrating

²¹ NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, ‘Meeting with Mr J. H. Howman, Minister of Internal Affairs for Southern Rhodesia’ [on 12 September 1963], Memorandum by R. G. Hatheway, African and Middle Eastern Division [hereafter AMED], DEA, 19 September 1963, paras. 8-10. ‘Visit to Ottawa by Mr J. H. Howman, Minister of Internal Affairs, Local Government and African Education of Southern Rhodesia, Sept. 12-13 1963’, Memorandum by D. B. Hicks, AMED, DEA, Ottawa, 21 October 1963, para. 15.

²² NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, ‘ Meeting of Mr Bennett (Southern Rhodesia) with Minister, March 17’, Memorandum by R. E. Collins, AMED, DEA, 18 March 1964, para. 2.

[Canadian] interest in Southern Rhodesia without implying any interference in their constitutional problems.’ Sensing an opportunity for progress, Carter recommended that the Canadian Government should consider extending its assistance through its new long-term, low interest low programme.²³ Yet within just a few days, developments in Rhodesia threatened to jeopardise the Canadian aid package. Ian Smith ousted Winston Field as Prime Minister, which signalled a further shift to the right in the Rhodesian Government. The Canadian External Aid Office called into question the rationale of providing assistance designed to facilitate African advancement in circumstances where the Rhodesian Government showed no commitment to that objective. This was not an unreasonable assessment, but as one senior External Affairs official concluded, if the Canadian Government went back on its offer, it would have a negative effect on its relations with Rhodesia and could preclude Canada from playing any further part in working out a solution to the problem of independence. Accordingly, it was recommended that the Canadian Government should follow through with its offer.²⁴

Even though the political situation in Rhodesia was not promising, Canadian officials did not abandon the hope that the Commonwealth might be able to influence future developments by focusing on Rhodesia’s economic requirements. In a brief for the 1964 Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting Canadian officials noted that the Rhodesian economy was in recession, and badly needed investment had dried up because of political uncertainty. Like other African countries, Rhodesia would require high levels of

²³ NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, ‘Southern Rhodesia – Canadian role’, Thomas Carter, AMED, DEA, c/o Canadian Embassy, Cape Town, to Paul Martin, Ottawa, Despatch No. 142, 7 April 1964, para. 7.

²⁴ NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, Marcel Cadieux, Acting Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, to Director General, External Aid Office, Letter, 30 April 1964.

government spending and private investment for development projects and expansion of educational facilities, but as long as the political situation remained unsettled the Rhodesian Government would not be able to attract sufficient investment.²⁵ It was observed that financial aid could be offered to the Rhodesian Government as an inducement for a commitment to African political advancement, and it was suggested that the Prime Ministers' Meeting:

might aim at producing a statement on Southern Rhodesia which would not give grounds to the present Southern Rhodesian Government to claim that the Commonwealth was attempting to interfere in Southern Rhodesia's internal affairs and which would at the same time give hope to the Africans and to liberal white Southern Rhodesians that the Commonwealth as a whole would be willing to give material support to help African educational and economic advancement.²⁶

As noted in Chapter One, in May 1964 the former Rhodesian Prime Minister, Garfield Todd, suggested that the British Government should be prepared to offer substantial assistance of £10 million per year for ten years in order to facilitate an agreement in Rhodesia.²⁷ The Old Commonwealth was willing to contribute only limited funds in respect of aid and technical assistance to Rhodesia, though Canada was willing to go much further than either Australia or New Zealand. Canadian officials advised ministers

²⁵ NAC: MG 31-E47, Vol. 66, 'Southern Rhodesia', Confidential Brief, 26 June 1964, paras. 8, 9, and 11.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 15.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, para 12; Archives New Zealand, Wellington/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga [hereafter ANZ]: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 9, Garfield Todd and Hardwicke Holderness to Sir Alec Douglas-Home, Letter, 15 May 1964.

that there was scope for Canada to increase the scale of its technical assistance from the initial figure of \$125,000 and to allocate grant aid funds and special development loans to Rhodesia, but this could not take a disproportionate share of the \$10 million allocated for aid to all Commonwealth countries in Africa, nor be greater than that offered to other countries with an equal or larger population.²⁸ The figure that the Canadians had in mind by the time of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting in July 1964 was around \$1.5 million.²⁹ This was a small figure in relation to Garfield Todd's suggested total assistance package in the sum of £100 million, but it represented more than a tenfold increase in Canada's initial technical assistance allocation for Rhodesia.

The Australian Government was prepared to contribute very little financial assistance to Rhodesia, which reflected the limitations of its overall external aid budget and the priorities that dictated allocation of funds. As one contemporary commentator noted: 'In Australia overseas aid has a low rating as a subject of political interest.'³⁰ Australia's aid budget in 1965-66 was around \$115 million, which was 0.6 per cent of GNP. This was slightly higher than Canada's external aid budget in relative terms (0.45 per cent of GNP) but not in absolute terms (\$190 million). The majority of Australian aid, some 76 per cent, was directed to Papua and New Guinea, leaving only \$34 million for wider

²⁸ NAC: MG31-E47, Vol. 66, 'Southern Rhodesia', Confidential Brief, 26 June 1964, paras. 13 and 14.

²⁹ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 9, J. S. Reid, New Zealand High Commissioner, Ottawa, to Secretary of External Affairs, Wellington, Letter, 15 June 1964.

³⁰ J. A. Camilleri, *An introduction to Australian foreign policy* (Milton: Jacaranda Press, 2nd edn. 1975), p. 27; David Scott, 'Some Aspects of Overseas Aid', in M. Teichmann (ed.), *New directions in Australian foreign policy, ally satellite or neutral?* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p. 117.

distribution.³¹ Africa was not a priority, and in any case Australian officials were not particularly enthusiastic about facilitating change in Rhodesia. In documents prepared before the 1964 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting Australian officials commented: 'We, and perhaps others, would not wish to see Africanisation of the administration for its own sake ... we doubt whether the idea would do much to help persuade the European community to accept an African-based government', which demonstrates clearly that they did not share the optimism of their Canadian counterparts. Officials advised Ministers that if they were pressed it would be possible to train around 20 Rhodesian African administrators through the SCAAP, at an annual cost of £35,000.³² At the conclusion of the Meeting there appeared to be a more optimistic tone in the Australian Department of External Affairs, which admitted that technical assistance to Rhodesia could have two useful results: first, it might help to diminish the validity of the argument put forward by Europeans that Africans were not suitably equipped to run the country; second, it could allay European fears that an African majority government would reduce standards to an unacceptable level. However, the Australian Government had not received any request for financial assistance from the Rhodesian Government (and there was no mention of any offer).³³ When the Zimbabwe African National Union solicited Australian scholarships for Rhodesian Africans it was told that the Australian

³¹ Scott, 'Some Aspects of Overseas Aid', in Teichmann (ed.), *New directions in Australian foreign policy*, p. 119.

³² National Archives of Australia, Canberra [hereafter NAA]: A1838, 190/10/1, Parts 2 and 3a, two confidential papers on Southern Rhodesia for 1964 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting [n.d. but June 1964].

³³ NAA: A1838, 190/11/162, Part 1, DEA, Canberra, to Australian High Commission, London, Cable No. 18191, 15 July 1964.

Government gave scholarships only to nominees of foreign governments.³⁴ The Rhodesian Government was obviously not disposed to nominate members of African nationalist movements, so they were bound to be disappointed.

The New Zealand external aid budget was smaller than that of Canada and Australia in both relative and absolute terms. During the 1950s, under the Colombo Plan, New Zealand contributed a mere 0.14 per cent of GNP to overseas aid. By 1972 (the UNCTAD target date for developed countries to donate one per cent of their GNP to developing countries annually), New Zealand's Official Development Assistance had risen to just 0.22 per cent of GNP, or \$22,486,000. This placed New Zealand towards the bottom of the international aid league table in absolute and relative terms. As with Australia, the overwhelming proportion of the aid budget was directed towards Asia and the Pacific, and New Zealand donated only tiny sums to Africa (around \$120,000 in 1971-72).³⁵ One analyst of New Zealand foreign policy, Richard Kennaway, observed that some New Zealanders felt that this was an entirely appropriate arrangement, because it reflected national interests and regional priorities. However, Kennaway argued that 'New Zealand has few enough links with large areas of the world, such as the African continent, and those few channels of communication and interchange of ideas which do exist – for example, through SCAAP and Commonwealth Education schemes – are therefore especially valuable.'³⁶ The idea that New Zealand *should* develop a greater interest in Africa did not, however, carry any weight in the Department of External

³⁴ NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 5, F. W. Truelove, First Secretary, Dar-Es-Salaam, to DEA, Canberra, Letter, 23 September 1965.

³⁵ R. Kennaway, *New Zealand Foreign Policy 1951-1971* (Wellington: Hicks Smith, 1972), pp. 138-41.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

Affairs, which took the view that ‘We ourselves have neither the resources nor the intention to extend our existing commitments in Africa.’³⁷

Another way in which the Old Commonwealth might have helped Rhodesia was through the offer of assisted immigration for European Rhodesians who did not wish to remain in Rhodesia under African majority rule. The Australian Government did consider this matter but decided not to facilitate emigration from Rhodesia for two reasons. First, the Federal Government in Salisbury had in 1959 asked Canberra not to extend the General Assisted Passage Scheme to Southern Rhodesia, presumably because the Federal Government wanted to stem the flow of European emigrants (which by 1964 had reached the rate of 1,000 per month) rather than encourage it since this would erode the European position in Rhodesia. Second, Australia did not wish ‘to gain a reputation as a refuge for Europeans from Africa, unwilling to come to terms with African nationalism.’ Thus, when Ghana proposed that Australia and Canada might assist a solution in Rhodesia by taking white migrants, the Australian Government did not comment on the suggestion.³⁸ This was unfortunate, because a public commitment to assist migration would have provided an obvious alternative for those European Rhodesians who were convinced that African majority rule meant certain disaster.

The Rhodesian Government was explicit on many occasions that the state of the Rhodesian economy was the main reason why it must gain independence. Rhodesian

³⁷ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 9, DEA, Wellington, to New Zealand High Commission, London, Cable No. 1074, 5 May 1964, para. 3.

³⁸ NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 2, ‘Southern Rhodesia’, brief for 1964 Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting [n.d. but June 1964], p. 4.

ministers argued that independence would create conditions of certainty that would attract investment, which Rhodesia desperately needed.³⁹ The economic situation in Rhodesia therefore presented an opportunity that Britain and the Old Commonwealth could have exploited to their advantage. As the Rhodesian Government admitted, proposals for aid and technical assistance were a useful way of demonstrating Commonwealth interest in Rhodesia without implying any interference in Rhodesian constitutional affairs.⁴⁰ Yet schemes for training African teachers and administrators, or the development of Rhodesia's infrastructure, required a huge level of investment to be effective in terms of advancing the status of Africans and creating confidence among Europeans in Rhodesia. The British Government, let alone those of the Old Commonwealth, balked at this degree of commitment, especially since the Rhodesian Government gave at best conflicting signals about its commitment to the cause of African advancement.⁴¹ In such

³⁹ NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, 'Visit to Ottawa by Mr J. H. Howman, Minister of Internal Affairs, Local Government and African Education of Southern Rhodesia, Sept. 12-13 1963', Memorandum by D. B. Hicks, AMED, DEA, Ottawa, 21 October 1963, para.13; RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, Ralph Collins, Canadian Ambassador to South Africa, to DEA, Ottawa, Cable No. 85, 3 July 1964. TNA: PRO, PREM 13/534, ff 86-95, 'Record of a meeting between Mr Wilson and Mr Smith', by Derek J. Mitchell, Prime Minister's Principal Private Secretary, 30 January 1965, para. 6; in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, p. 185.

⁴⁰ NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, 'Southern Rhodesia – Canadian role', Tom Carter, AMED, DEA, c/o Canadian Embassy, Cape Town, to Paul Martin, Ottawa, Despatch No. 142, 7 April 1964, para. 7.

⁴¹ In August 1964 Oliver Bennett told British officials his Government had calculated that under the 1961 Constitution an African majority government could emerge in 'significantly less than ten years.' TNA: PRO, DO 183/317, John Wakely, British High Commission, Ottawa, to Godfrey Bass, Southern Rhodesia Department, CRO, Letter, 2 September 1964. However, in January 1965 Ian Smith told Harold Wilson that the Rhodesian Government was looking at ways to prolong European control for '60 or 70 years, or perhaps

circumstances it would have been politically difficult for Britain and the Old Commonwealth to justify an aid programme for Rhodesia that exceeded levels of assistance for all other African countries combined, particularly as those other countries were in a much worse economic state than Rhodesia. Taxpayers at home would probably not have been sympathetic to a massive assistance programme for Rhodesia, whilst African Commonwealth states may have been critical of a policy that afforded special treatment to a white minority regime. Nevertheless, Britain and the Old Commonwealth failed to explore sufficiently their opportunity to influence the Rhodesian Government through positive inducement, and Australia and New Zealand were notably unenthusiastic about participating in schemes to improve the position of Africans in Rhodesia. If greater levels of aid and technical assistance had been offered it might have created a more favourable impression in Salisbury of the value of the Commonwealth. Certainly it can be argued that this approach would have been easier than trying to persuade the Rhodesian Government to accept Commonwealth proposals for constitutional change or suggestions for Commonwealth political involvement in discussions about Rhodesian independence, as the following discussion demonstrates.

even longer.’ TNA: PRO, PREM 13/534, ff 86-95, ‘Record of a meeting between Mr Wilson and Mr Smith’, by Derek J. Mitchell, Prime Minister’s Principal Private Secretary, 30 January 1965, para. 1; in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, p. 184. The record of this meeting was conveyed to the Australian High Commission in London (and presumably to the Canadian and New Zealand High Commissions also). NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 4, Australian High Commission, London, to DEA, Canberra, Cable No. 796, 2 February 1964.

Commonwealth constitutional proposals and suggestions for Commonwealth participation

Canadian interest in the Rhodesian problem was manifest in suggestions for a Commonwealth conference to discuss the issue, and in proposals for constitutional arrangements that would facilitate Rhodesian advancement towards independence. These proposals, put forward mainly by Canadian officials between 1963 and 1965, foundered on two big rocks: a lack of enthusiasm among Canada's Old Commonwealth partners (and sometimes even among Canadian politicians), which tended to undermine the force of the proposals; and outright opposition from the Rhodesian Government, which was impervious to any suggestion that the Commonwealth might have a role to play in finding a solution to the problem.

The impending dissolution of the Central African Federation prompted greater Commonwealth scrutiny of the problems in its successor states. In September 1963, Canada and Tanganyika jointly proposed to the British Government that there should be a Commonwealth meeting to discuss Southern Rhodesia. On this occasion the British Government was less than enthusiastic, which caused frustration and bemusement among Canadian officials who had a progressive attitude to the Rhodesian problem. The Canadian High Commissioner in Tanganyika wrote:

I find it somewhat difficult to reconcile the British view that little could come out of a Commonwealth meeting at this time ... and Lord Home's disenchantment 'with behaviour in [the] UN of African members of [the]

Commonwealth who never seem to make the slightest effort to consult with [a] view to devising formulas that Britain could accept'.⁴²

The High Commissioner pointed out that an African member of the Commonwealth (Tanganyika) had just taken the initiative along with an older member of the Commonwealth (Canada) in an effort to facilitate an agreement on Rhodesia, but the British Government had indicated that it was not interested in such an initiative. He continued:

Nor can I reconcile this reluctance to plan for discussion at a meeting where moderate countries would take the initiative, with the British view that discussion of Southern Rhodesia by the Commonwealth group at the UN is probably unavoidable anyway! One would have thought that, if Britain believes Southern Rhodesia is going to be discussed, it would be to her advantage to have the initiative in the hands of a group of moderate countries rather than leave it to Ghana to make the running.⁴³

Despite initial British reluctance the proposal for a conference resurfaced later in the year. In October 1963 Sir Alec Douglas-Home took over from Harold Macmillan as Prime Minister, and Duncan Sandys, who retained his position as Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, succeeded R. A. Butler as the responsible minister for Central Africa. In November Sandys reiterated to the House of Commons that the British

⁴² NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, N. F. H. Berlis, Canadian High Commissioner, Dar Es Salaam, to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, Letter, 16 September 1963, para. 3

⁴³ Ibid.

Government was concerned for the unity of the Commonwealth and he stressed the necessity for Commonwealth consultation on the Rhodesian problem. Sandys set off alarm bells in Salisbury when he said that he was ‘wondering whether we might not go further than that. Might it not perhaps be possible for other members of the Commonwealth to help in a more positive way in the task of finding a generally acceptable solution?’⁴⁴ Winston Field wrote to Sandys asking for clarification of the role that he envisaged other members of the Commonwealth might play. Field affirmed that the matter was one for determination between the British and Rhodesian Governments and indicated his apprehension of the effect that Sandys’ remarks might have at the United Nations, where the British Government had consistently maintained that the grant of independence to Rhodesia did not admit of outside interference.⁴⁵ Sandys conveyed through Sir Roy Welensky an invitation to Field to attend a conference at which the Commonwealth Secretary and Rhodesian Prime Minister would discuss the problem of Rhodesian independence with Robert Menzies, Lester Pearson, and Julius Nyerere, but Field replied that he was not prepared to discuss Southern Rhodesia’s independence with any country other than Britain.⁴⁶ Sandys tried to persuade Field that he was not asking the Commonwealth to ‘sit in judgment’ on Rhodesia and he was not thinking of a formal conference, but rather talks without any fixed agenda that were ‘entirely exploratory and consultative in character’, which ‘would not in any way affect the responsibilities of our two governments for the ultimate solution’. Sandys encouraged Field to accept the

⁴⁴ Quoted in Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, p. 188. For the whole speech see *Hansard*, House of Commons Debates, 15 November 1963, cols. 584-87.

⁴⁵ Field to Sandys, 27 November 1963, paras. 1 and 2, Cmnd. 2807, *Southern Rhodesia: documents relating to the negotiations between the United Kingdom and Southern Rhodesian Governments November 1963 – November 1965* (London: HMSO, 1965), p. 5.

⁴⁶ Field to Sandys, 2 December 1963, Cmnd. 2807, p. 6.

proposal because it would ‘tend to create a more sympathetic atmosphere and a better understanding in other Commonwealth countries of the nature of Southern Rhodesia’s problem and of the policy and attitude of your Government.’⁴⁷ However, Field rejected the proposal for three reasons: first, it was ‘without precedent in British Colonial history’; second, it would be interpreted as a breach of ‘the principle of exclusive responsibility’ that Britain claimed at the United Nations; and third, the attitude of Commonwealth Governments was ‘likely to be conditioned either by doctrinaire considerations or by considerations of national interest which will have little or no bearing on the best interests of the people of Southern Rhodesia now or in the future.’ Field also indicated that he did not agree with Sandys’ view that willingness to enter into discussion with the Commonwealth would create greater sympathy and understanding of Rhodesia’s problems, since he saw no evidence of ‘of a willingness to view the political circumstances in Southern Rhodesia with a degree of objectivity and a sense of historical perspective.’⁴⁸ Field’s emphatic rejection therefore contained some indication of the Rhodesian Government’s general attitude towards the Commonwealth (which is explored in more detail in the next chapter).

There were also some concerns in Ottawa about the viability of a conference, which is somewhat surprising considering that the proposal was first mooted jointly by Canada and Tanganyika. In March 1964 Paul Martin confessed to Oliver Bennett that although he had agreed with the proposal for a conference Sandys put it forward, ‘he had always been dubious about its efficacy and had been somewhat relieved when it was turned down by

⁴⁷ Sandys to Field, 7 December 1963, paras. 8-10, Cmnd. 2807, p. 7.

⁴⁸ Field to Sandys, 13 December 1963, paras. 3 and 4, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 8-9.

Field.’⁴⁹ This suggests either that Canadian officials were more progressive than Canadian ministers, or that Canadian ministers were more realistic than their officials. Both should certainly have had no illusions about Rhodesian attitudes towards Commonwealth involvement in the Rhodesian problem. During his visit to Ottawa in September 1963, Jack Howman, the Rhodesian Minister of Internal Affairs, expressed doubts about whether ‘African Commonwealth countries would help to find any solution short of complete surrender to African demands which his Government was not prepared to make.’ Although Howman was interested to hear that Julius Nyerere was willing to consider a compromise solution in Rhodesia that would give Africans less than ‘one man one vote’, he suggested that ‘Radio Dar-Es-Salaam was one of his Government’s most troublesome enemies and Mr Nyerere might best do something to curb their propaganda.’⁵⁰ Howman indicated that he did not think that the Commonwealth could play any special role in the Rhodesian problem and when the idea of a Commonwealth good offices mission was put to him he ‘clearly implied that his Government would regard [the] appointment of such a mission as unwarranted interference in their affairs.’⁵¹ Similarly, when Tom Carter, a senior Canadian External Affairs official, visited Salisbury in April 1964 he found that Rhodesian ministers and officials ‘were very anxious to explain their points of view, but with only one or two exceptions, they did not envisage any role for Canada in the resolution of Southern Rhodesian constitutional difficulties.’

⁴⁹ NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR Part 1.1, ‘Meeting of Mr Bennett (Southern Rhodesia) with Minister, March 17’, Memorandum by R. E. Collins, AMED, DEA, 18 March 1965, para. 3.

⁵⁰ NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, ‘Visit to Ottawa by Mr J. H. Howman, Minister of Internal Affairs, Local Government and African Education of Southern Rhodesia, Sept. 12-13 1963’, Memorandum by D. B. Hicks, AMED, DEA, Ottawa, 21 October 1963, para. 4.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, para. 5.

Carter advised: 'We should not, of course, delude ourselves as to the role Canada might play ... The Canadian role, at best, would be a marginal one.'⁵²

Nevertheless, Canadian officials were not wholly discouraged by Rhodesian intransigence. Conscious of the need for new ideas in advance of the 1965 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting, the Canadian High Commissioner in Nigeria, Harrison Cleveland, launched a diplomatic initiative on the Rhodesian problem, which was apparently shot down by his own ministers and the Australian Government. Cleveland observed that in order to forestall the influence of more radical elements in Rhodesia, such as the Organisation of African Unity, and Russian- and Chinese-backed African nationalists, it might prove necessary to 'associate the Commonwealth in some way with the transitional arrangements leading to independence'.⁵³ Cleveland proposed setting up in Rhodesia a Commonwealth Commission of Government similar to that used in Newfoundland during the 1930s and 1940s.⁵⁴ Cleveland recognised that the situation

⁵² NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, 'Southern Rhodesia – Canadian role', Tom Carter, AMED, DEA, c/o Canadian Embassy, Cape Town, to Paul Martin, Ottawa, Despatch No. 142, 7 April 1964, para. 2.

⁵³ NAA: A1838, 190/11/1, Part 2, Harrison Cleveland, Canadian High Commissioner, Lagos, to Arnold Smith, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, Letter No. 226, 21 May 1965, para. 3.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 4. The Dominion of Newfoundland was unable to pay the interest charges on its national debt as a result of the Great Depression and in 1934 a Royal Commission was appointed to investigate the situation. Newfoundland surrendered its Dominion status to Britain until it was once again able to support itself and in place of responsible government Britain established a Commission of Government, which consisted of appointed British and Newfoundland civil servants, to administer Newfoundland. The outbreak of the Second World War revived Newfoundland's economy, but the British Government feared that after the War it would once again collapse and become a drain on the Treasury. Britain therefore encouraged Confederation between Canada and Newfoundland, which was narrowly approved by

in Rhodesia was ‘obviously not on all fours’ with the conditions that had prevailed in Newfoundland, but suggested that ‘a comparable constitutional basis might be sought.’ A Commission of Government for Rhodesia could include representatives of the United Kingdom, Rhodesia, one African and one non-African Commonwealth country. Cleveland suggested that:

The Commission of Government would not need to exercise authority in matters which are being satisfactorily handled by existing ministries. However, it could have sufficient authority to ensure that the terms of any agreement reached between Britain and Rhodesia are implemented. Among its responsibilities the Commission of Government could recommend the date on which Rhodesia would have fulfilled the preconditions for independence.⁵⁵

Cleveland also suggested that this proposal might be easier for the British Government to accept if a Commonwealth Court was established to hear cases involving racial discrimination in Rhodesia. The continuation of the Commonwealth Court after Rhodesia became independent on the basis of African majority rule would also provide some measure of protection for the European settlers.⁵⁶ Cleveland advised that from his conversations with African Prime Ministers he believed Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and the

referendum, and in March 1949 Newfoundland became a province of Canada. See David MacKenzie, ‘Canada, the North Atlantic Triangle, and the Empire’, in Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (eds.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire Volume IV: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 589-91.

⁵⁵ NAA: A1838, 190/11/1, Part 2, Cleveland to Smith, 21 May 1965, para. 4.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 5.

Gambia would support a coalition government in Rhodesia if Ian Smith included two or three Africans in his Cabinet.⁵⁷

It is uncertain how Cleveland's proposal was received in Ottawa, but Australian officials formed the impression that whilst the idea of a Commission of Government was not likely to commend itself to Lester Pearson the proposal for a Commonwealth Court might hold some attraction.⁵⁸ The fact that neither of these ideas were mentioned in Canadian briefs for the Prime Ministers' Meeting and were not raised by Pearson in London suggests the Canadian Government thought that Cleveland's proposals were not worth pursuing.⁵⁹ Even if the Canadian Government had decided to pursue them it would not have received any support from Australia. When Paul Hasluck, the Australian Minister of External Affairs, heard about Cleveland's proposals he exclaimed: 'What a damn silly idea! I will take a copy to London with me in case it comes to the surface.'⁶⁰ Why Hasluck should have thought this is not clear. Cleveland admitted that the circumstances in Rhodesia in

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 6.

⁵⁸ NAA: A1838, 190/11/1, Part 2, 'Rhodesia: Possibility of Canadian Initiative', Memorandum by C. T. Moodie, Acting First Assistant Secretary, Division IV, DEA, Canberra, to Minister for External Affairs, [n.d. but June 1965], para. 4. Australian information was based on discussions with T. W. H. Read, the Canadian Acting High Commissioner in Canberra, who was not acting on instructions from Ottawa. The reaction of the Canadian Government is most likely recorded in RG 25 Vols. 8985-8987, 20-RH-1-4, (multiple parts), but those files were reviewed and declassified in January 2006, shortly before submission of this thesis.

⁵⁹ NAC: MG31-E47, Vol. 66, 'Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, London, June 17-25, 1965', External Affairs Confidential Brief, 7 June 1965; Minutes of PMM (65) 8th Meeting, Item 5, 'Rhodesia', pp. 75-87.

⁶⁰ NAA: A1838, 190/11/1, Part 2, 'Rhodesia: Possibility of Canadian Initiative', Memorandum by C. T. Moodie, marginal hand-written minute.

1965 were not exactly analogous to the situation in Newfoundland in the 1930s, but it may be argued that this did not automatically invalidate the proposal for a transitional arrangement based on a Commission of Government. If the Commonwealth had accepted Cleveland's ideas the biggest stumbling block would no doubt have been the attitude of the Rhodesian Government, which would have protested this form of Commonwealth interference perhaps even more vigorously than it resisted proposals for a Commonwealth conference.

The idea of a special Commonwealth mission surfaced in October 1965, immediately after the breakdown of negotiations between the British and Rhodesian Governments in London. Harold Wilson wrote to Ian Smith advising that Sir Robert Menzies had agreed to take part in 'a small Commonwealth mission of respected senior statesmen which could go to Rhodesia and examine the whole situation.' Wilson hoped that the Prime Ministers of Nigeria and Ceylon and one other Commonwealth state would accompany Menzies.⁶¹ Wilson also made a television broadcast announcing the proposal, which he ended with an appeal: 'I know I speak for everyone in these islands, all parties, all our people, when I say to Mr Smith, "Prime Minister, think again."' ⁶² The seriousness of the situation commanded Old Commonwealth support. Keith Holyoake, for example, immediately endorsed Wilson's proposal by issuing a press statement that he was confident 'a mission of Prime Ministers could give new perspective to the problem and clarify the implications of differing courses of action.'⁶³ Yet despite the public support

⁶¹ Wilson to Smith, 12 October 1965, para. 2, Cmnd. 2807, p. 95.

⁶² Harold Wilson, *The Labour Government 1964-1970: A Personal Record* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, and Michael Joseph, 1971), p. 150.

⁶³ NAA: A1838, 370/1/26, Part 1, Australian High Commission, Wellington, to DEA, Canberra, Cable No. 502, 13 October 1965.

given by Old Commonwealth leaders they must have privately felt that this proposal was a measure of the British Government's desperation. Wilson told his Cabinet that the Rhodesian Government would no doubt agree to a Commonwealth mission by Menzies, but it would be unacceptable to the British Government (and the Commonwealth) if the mission were confined only to Menzies and/or representatives from white Commonwealth countries.⁶⁴ In fact, whilst the Rhodesian Government expressed its high regard for Menzies, and highlighted a standing invitation for him to visit Rhodesia, it was not prepared to accept any form of Commonwealth mission. Smith replied to Wilson that those involved in such a mission would be 'so far from the issues involved that ... they could not better any contribution made by you and the Commonwealth Secretary', and reiterated the fact that the Rhodesian Government had 'always maintained that the Commonwealth has no jurisdiction as far as Rhodesia is concerned.' Smith also pointed out that a Commonwealth mission would 'have within its ranks people who have openly expressed themselves as enemies of the present Rhodesian Government and Constitution.' He highlighted Tanzania's pledge to withdraw from the Commonwealth if Britain granted independence to Rhodesia on the basis of anything less than African majority rule, and noted that Zambia and India had both raised objections to the proposal for a Commonwealth mission.⁶⁵ 'In other words', as Smith later recalled in his memoirs, 'Wilson's plan was floored before it started, so the whole thing turned out to be an utter farce.'⁶⁶

⁶⁴ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, Minutes of OPD (65) 44th Meeting, 15 October 1965, p. 3.

⁶⁵ Smith to Wilson, 18 October 1965, paras. 3-5, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 96-97.

⁶⁶ Ian Smith, *Bitter Harvest: The Great Betrayal and the Dreadful Aftermath* (London: Blake, 2001), p. 95.

Yet whilst the Rhodesian Government was disdainful of the Commonwealth and particularly its African members (which is discussed in the next chapter), it was not entirely unreceptive to the Old Commonwealth. In July 1964 Ian Smith told the Canadian Ambassador to South Africa that the views of Canada, Australia and New Zealand were ‘the only ones that count’.⁶⁷ Moreover, in his memoirs Smith portrayed his personal relationship with Menzies and Holyoake as perfectly amiable.⁶⁸ Perhaps, then, the Old Commonwealth Prime Ministers might have had a greater role to play after all. Menzies and Pearson both had experience of crisis diplomacy and were respected Commonwealth statesmen who enjoyed considerable prestige.⁶⁹ It is not inconceivable that had they been able to discuss the Rhodesian problem with the Rhodesian Government at an early stage, well before negotiations with Britain entered a critical phase, they might have been able to inspire sufficient confidence to arrive at a formula for a solution. On the other hand, as one Australian diplomat noted in October 1965, for almost two years ‘British officials have cudgelled themselves numb in search for various alternative formulae which might be negotiable with Salisbury and which international opinion might be brought to tolerate.’⁷⁰ It might therefore be presuming too much to suggest that Pearson or Menzies could have established a breakthrough, but the unwillingness of the Rhodesian Government to admit any form of Commonwealth interference ultimately renders such speculation idle. However, in the absence of more determined attempts at constructive

⁶⁷ NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, Ralph Collins, Canadian Ambassador to South Africa, to DEA, Ottawa, Cable No. 85, 3 July 1964.

⁶⁸ Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, p. 87.

⁶⁹ Melakopides, *Pragmatic Idealism*, pp. 80-81; and Russel Ward, *The History of Australia: The Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 337.

⁷⁰ NAA: A1838, 935/9/5, Part 9, A. J. Eastman, Senior External Affairs Representative, Australian High Commission, London, to DEA, Canberra, Cable No. 9138, 22 October 1965, para. 3.

engagement the British Government sought to involve the Old Commonwealth in its half-hearted attempts to deter the Rhodesian Government from a UDI.

The failure of deterrence

The following discussion will firstly define deterrence and note the requirements for a successful deterrent strategy, and then explain why the Old Commonwealth's efforts to support the British Government in this regard failed. Deterrence has been defined as: 'an effort by one actor to persuade an opponent not to take action of some kind against his interests by convincing the opponent that the costs and risks of doing so will outweigh what he hopes to gain thereby.'⁷¹ Successful deterrence depends upon a state conveying clearly to an opponent that the course of action it contemplates threatens the fundamental interests of the deterring state and that it is committed to defending its fundamental interests. That commitment must be backed by threats that are both credible and sufficiently potent in the mind of the opponent to convince it that the deterring state has the motivation and the capability to defend its fundamental interests.⁷² Yet attempts by Britain and the Old Commonwealth to deter Rhodesia from a UDI between 1964 and 1965 lacked the essential attributes that were required for success. They were also dealing with an opponent that rationalised the situation in its own terms and considered that its own fundamental interests were at stake in its claim for independence. It is clear that without a public commitment to use force (which was entirely unacceptable to the Old Commonwealth) the governments of Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand

⁷¹ Gordon A. Craig and Alexander L. George, *Force and Statecraft: Diplomatic Problems of Our Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2nd edn., 1990), p. 179.

⁷² *Ibid.*

could not have deterred Rhodesia from a UDI even if they had orchestrated their efforts with greater regard for the principles of deterrence.

The first attempt by the Old Commonwealth to deter Rhodesia from a UDI was when Canada, Australia and New Zealand acted in support of the British Government's warning statement of October 1964.⁷³ Canadian officials suggested immediately that although the British Government had not approached the Canadian Government it should nevertheless do whatever it could to support British efforts at deterrence and to show solidarity with the African members of the Commonwealth.⁷⁴ Canadian officials also urged their Australian and New Zealand counterparts to adopt a similar view and take supportive action.⁷⁵ The New Zealand Government was swift to react, irrespective of Canadian pressure. Holyoake released a statement, which observed that the terms of the British statement were in line with the discussions on Rhodesia at the 1964 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting, and confirmed his Government's opposition to a UDI.⁷⁶ Yet privately Holyoake told Wilson that although he supported the terms of the British statement: 'I cannot hope, however, that publication at this stage will succeed in deterring the Rhodesians from going ahead irrespective of the consequences with all

⁷³ For details of this statement see above, Ch. 1, pp. 37-39.

⁷⁴ NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, 'Record of Discussion on Southern Rhodesia' [on 28 October 1964], by L. M. Berry, AMED, DEA, 30 October 1964, para. 6; 'Southern Rhodesia – Possible UDI – Canadian Interests', Memorandum by Tom Carter, AMED, DEA, for Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, 28 October 1964.

⁷⁵ NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 3a, Sir Kenneth Bailey, Australian High Commissioner, Ottawa, to DEA, Canberra, Cable No. 342, 28 October 1964.

⁷⁶ NAA: A1209, 1963/6696, Part 1, Australian High Commission, Wellington, to DEA, Canberra, Cable No. 557, 28 October 1964.

their embarrassments for the Commonwealth especially within the United Nations.⁷⁷ Australian officials demonstrated similar concerns; it was suggested that although it might be better for the British Government to be rid of the Rhodesian problem through a UDI, 'from our point of view it was surely far better that the British should go on dealing with the problem than that Southern Rhodesia should break away when we would be faced with all sorts of awkward initiatives and choices in the United Nations.'⁷⁸ The Australian Prime Minister was similarly anxious that Wilson's warning statement should not foreclose constructive engagement with the Rhodesian Government. Menzies wrote to Wilson: 'You may be assured of our full support ... for your latest statement ... I have no doubt that you will do what you can to preserve some possibility of negotiation.'⁷⁹ It is clear from the evidence that whereas the Canadian Government was concerned to support Britain on the Rhodesian issue order to preserve the integrity of the Commonwealth, the Australian and New Zealand Governments were motivated more by a desire to avoid the awkward issue of reprisals against Rhodesia in the event of a UDI.

Whatever the motives of the Old Commonwealth, the action that they took in support of the British Government in October 1964 was certainly effective. Ian Smith later wrote

⁷⁷ NAA: A1209, 1963/6696, Part 1, Australian High Commission, Wellington, to DEA, Canberra, Cable No. 559, 28 October 1964.

⁷⁸ NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 4, 'Australian Contingency Plans', Record of Conversation between Mr J. R. Rowland, Assistant Secretary, Division IV, DEA, Canberra, and Mr Stansfield, Canadian High Commission, Canberra, 28 October 1964.

⁷⁹ NAA: A1209, 1963/6696, Part 1, DEA, Canberra, to Australian High Commission, London, Cable No. O.27765, 29 October 1964. Other documents on this file indicate that Australian officials also prevailed upon Menzies to issue a press statement in support of the British Government's position.

that Wilson's 'bull-headed tactics' had no effect.⁸⁰ Yet the deterrent action taken by Britain and the Old Commonwealth clearly postponed any illegal action by the Rhodesian Government. Ian Smith admitted in a broadcast two days after the British statement that he had abandoned his hope of independence by Christmas.⁸¹ The state funeral of Winston Churchill in London in January 1965 presented the Prime Ministers of Britain and the Old Commonwealth with an opportunity to impress upon Smith in person their opposition to a UDI. Smith's behaviour was difficult and in discussions with Wilson he was bullish about Rhodesia's prospects for independence.⁸² His mood was perhaps not unrelated to the frustration caused by the action that Britain and the Old Commonwealth had taken the previous October. In his memoirs Smith recalled that he was invited to the Savoy Hotel for tea with Menzies and Holyoake on the morning after Churchill's funeral. He wrote: 'It was obvious to us that Wilson had asked them to try and twist my arm over the independence issue', but suggested that their talk was all about sport, not politics.⁸³ Yet Smith's account is distorted, for Holyoake told Wilson that he had advised Smith that Rhodesia needed friends and ought to be cautious.⁸⁴ Smith also made no mention in his

⁸⁰ Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, p. 83.

⁸¹ Elaine Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence* (London: Croom Helm, 1978) p. 33.

⁸² For Wilson's account see *The Labour Government*, pp. 73-75; and for Smith's version of events, *Bitter Harvest*, pp. 85-87. The official British record is TNA: PRO, PREM 13/534, ff 86-95, 'Record of a meeting between Mr Wilson and Mr Smith', by Derek J. Mitchell, Prime Minister's Principal Private Secretary, 30 January 1965; in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, pp. 184-85.

⁸³ Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, p. 87.

⁸⁴ TNA: PRO, DO 183/676, 'Record of Conversation between the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Mr Keith Holyoake, at No. 10 Downing Street at 10 am on Monday February 1.'

memoirs of another meeting that he had with Lester Pearson at the Dorchester Hotel, where the talk was definitely about politics. The Canadian record of the meeting states:

The general impression that Mr. Smith conveyed was of an almost fanatical determination to make no concession whatever from the position as now established in Rhodesia. He clearly thinks there is no possibility of any negotiation or any adjustment, however, minor. It is equally apparent that he personally, and presumably his government, is quite prepared to contemplate independence on a unilateral basis outside the Commonwealth – counting on the support of their immediate neighbouring countries to the South and the weakness of African states generally.⁸⁵

This confirms that Smith adopted the same posture in his meeting with Pearson as he had with Wilson that same day. Oddly, Smith told Pearson, Menzies and Holyoake that he had not had a meeting with Wilson. As Wilson later wrote, it was astounding that Smith thought he could get away with misleading the Commonwealth leaders like this, as they were bound to discuss matters with Wilson.⁸⁶ It is perhaps unfortunate that no attempt was made to convene a meeting between all of the Old Commonwealth Prime Ministers and Smith so that they could warn him jointly, face-to-face, that a UDI would meet with Commonwealth reprisals. On the other hand, the records of Smith's meetings with Wilson and Pearson suggest that he really did not care what they thought or did and was willing to deal with the consequences of illegal action. Thereafter, attempts to deter

⁸⁵ NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.2, 'Meeting of the Prime Minister with the Prime Minister of Rhodesia' [on 30 January 1965], Note for the File, 2 February 1965.

⁸⁶ Wilson, *The Labour Government*, pp. 74-75.

Rhodesia from a UDI became even more difficult because the Rhodesian Government had time to consider how it could circumvent some of the consequences that it knew would flow from any illegal action on its part.⁸⁷

Smith's behaviour in London and his casual attitude towards the consequences of a UDI caused grave concern in the Canadian Government. It was suggested at both the official and political levels that the British Government should be more specific about the consequences of a UDI, and should put forward proposals for constitutional reform. Even if this provoked a UDI then Britain's more positive approach to the Rhodesian problem would at least limit the damage to the Commonwealth.⁸⁸ In a letter to Arthur Bottomley, Paul Martin reiterated the Canadian Government's position:

I believe that our two Governments agree closely in our approach to the Rhodesian problem, although your direct interest and responsibility is, of course, far greater than ours. We are, however, deeply concerned about the situation in Rhodesia because of the strain which it continues to place on relations between old and new members of the Commonwealth and because of the damage which a unilateral declaration of independence might cause to the whole position of the West in Africa.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ On 26 April 1965, the Rhodesian Government published a White Paper entitled 'Economic Aspects of a Declaration of Independence', which suggested that the economic consequences of a UDI would not be as serious as the British Government had warned in its statement of October 1964.

⁸⁸ TNA: PRO, DO 183/674, E. J. Emery, British High Commission, Ottawa, to K. J. Neale, CRO, Letter reporting the views of Tom Carter, 11 February 1965; Paul Martin to Arthur Bottomley, Letter, 18 February 1965 (also in FO 371/181876).

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Martin's message arrived just before the Commonwealth Secretary was due to visit Rhodesia. On his return Bottomley advised Martin that he had left Smith in no doubt about the likely consequences of a UDI. Bottomley did not think that a more precise statement of British intentions would have any greater effect on Smith 'because, in spite of the consequences, he is in the last resort prepared to face them if he cannot achieve a negotiated settlement.'⁹⁰ Australian officials reacted in a similar way when they learned of Martin's message to Bottomley. They questioned Martin's sense of urgency about the Rhodesian problem and doubted both the efficacy of using economic arguments to reason with Smith and the utility of economic sanctions in the event of a UDI.⁹¹ The Australian Ambassador to South Africa wrote: 'I find it surprising that the Canadians should still regard Mr Smith as a sort of man who will be impressed by threats. He is not that sort of man. I should also judge that he is already very conscious of the kinds of punitive action which might follow a unilateral declaration.'⁹² The Ambassador dismissed Canadian concerns about the likely impact of a UDI on the Commonwealth, implied that Martin was ignorant of the political situation in Rhodesia, and observed that discussion of the Rhodesian problem at the forthcoming Commonwealth Prime Minister's Meeting would not find favour with Robert Menzies.⁹³ Clearly, then, there was no enthusiasm in Britain or Australia for Canadian proposals for a more forceful deterrent statement.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ TNA: PRO, DO 183/674, Bottomley to Martin, Cable No. 790, 2 April 1965 (also in FO 371/181877).

⁹¹ NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 4, 'Southern Rhodesia: Call at Mr Read's Request', Record of Conversation, 25 February 1965.

⁹² NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 4, 'Southern Rhodesia: Mr Martin's Message', Memorandum by J. C. G. Kevin, Australian Ambassador to South Africa, 25 February 1965, para. 1.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, paras. 2, 7 and 8.

⁹⁴ The New Zealand Government was aware of Canadian thinking, but made no comment. ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 11, New Zealand Deputy High Commissioner, Ottawa, to Secretary of External

The threat of economic sanctions in the event of a UDI certainly did not have much psychological effect on the Rhodesian Government, which knew very well that Rhodesian trade with the Old Commonwealth was limited and therefore dispensable. For the same reason, the Old Commonwealth did not have faith in sanctions either as an instrument of deterrence or coercive diplomacy. Doubts were even evident in Canada at both the official and political levels. Trade between Canada and Rhodesia was worth around \$3 million annually, which gave the Canadian Government very little economic leverage.⁹⁵ The Canadian Government also knew that Ian Smith was unperturbed by the loss of Commonwealth preferences, since he thought that these would probably disappear within a few years anyway.⁹⁶ Lester Pearson was therefore not optimistic that the threat of economic sanctions would have much effect in deterring Rhodesia from a UDI.⁹⁷ Australian trade with Rhodesia was on a similar scale to that of Canada. Shortly after the dissolution of the Central African Federation Australian officials reported that in 1961-62 Australian imports from the Federation amounted to just under £2 million and Australian exports were worth a little more than £3 million.⁹⁸ In 1965-66 Australian exports to

Affairs, Wellington, Letter, 26 January 1965; and New Zealand High Commission, Ottawa, to Prime Minister and Secretary of External Affairs, Wellington, Cable No. 62, 18 February 1965.

⁹⁵ NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, 'Southern Rhodesia – Possible UDI – Canadian Interests', Memorandum by Tom Carter, AMED, DEA, for Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, 28 October 1964.

⁹⁶ NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, Ralph Collins, Canadian Ambassador to South Africa, to DEA, Ottawa, Cable No. 85, 3 July 1964.

⁹⁷ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 13, Copy of text of cable from McGill, Canadian High Commission, Dar-Es-Salaam, 8 October 1965.

⁹⁸ NAA: A1838, 190/10/6, Part 1, 'Australian Trade Commissioner, Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia', Memorandum by R. L. Harry, First Assistant Secretary, Division IV, DEA, Canberra, 17 January 1964, para. 4.

Rhodesia were around \$5 million (and remained at a similar level for the remainder of the decade despite the introduction of sanctions).⁹⁹ It is therefore not surprising that Australian officials repeatedly advised that sanctions would have little effect.¹⁰⁰ New Zealand was an even greater irrelevance to the Rhodesian Government in economic terms. In 1963-64 New Zealand exports to the Central African Federation were worth only £169,792 and imports from the Federation amounted to just £293,330.¹⁰¹ Trade figures clearly demonstrate that the relationship between Rhodesia and the Old Commonwealth was a long way from being a vital economic interest for either side, and threats of economic sanctions could not, therefore, be expected to deter Rhodesia from a UDI.

Shortly before the negotiations between Wilson and Smith in London in October 1965, Wilson requested Pearson, Menzies, and Holyoake to ‘approach Smith in whatever way you think best calculated to influence him and his colleagues against extreme action on their part ... It seems to me, subject to the course of events in the next few days, that a message from you would be most effective if it were made immediately and publicly after it became clear that the current negotiation has foundered.’¹⁰² The Old Commonwealth Prime Ministers were at a loss to understand Wilson’s reasoning; they recognised that if

⁹⁹ Figures cited in Glen St. J. Barclay, ‘Friends in Salisbury: Australia and the Rhodesian Unilateral Declaration of Independence, 1965-72’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (1983), p. 47.

¹⁰⁰ NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 5, ‘Rhodesia – Present Situation’, Report by J. C. G. Kevin, Australian Ambassador to South Africa, 6 May 1965.

¹⁰¹ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 11, Department of Trade Memorandum, 27 January 1964.

¹⁰² TNA: PRO, DO 183/674, Wilson to Pearson, Cable No. 2374, 2 October 1965. Similar messages were sent to Menzies and Holyoake.

they delivered their messages to Smith after negotiations had failed it would have little effect. Holyoake advised Wilson: 'I prefer that a candid but friendly warning from New Zealand be delivered during your current negotiations and before any irrevocable step is taken.'¹⁰³ Holyoake's message was indeed forthright but balanced. He warned that in the event of a UDI New Zealand would not recognise an illegal regime, and observed: 'Economic and trading preferences would have to be withdrawn and it would breach the present sympathetic relationship between our two governments.' Holyoake affirmed New Zealand's admiration for the European achievement in Rhodesia and suggested that their interests would be best served by a policy of reconciliation and acceptance of the principle of majority rule, with an appropriate period of transition.¹⁰⁴ Menzies rejected the two extreme positions associated with the Rhodesian question – that there should either be immediate majority rule or indefinite minority rule – and asserted that the problem was one of timetable. Menzies warned Smith that if a UDI took place 'the results, not all of which are foreseeable, could be both painful and difficult.' In particular Menzies pointed out that if the United Nations became involved it could lead to a situation that the Australian Government could neither 'anticipate nor control.' Menzies also praised Wilson's handling of the Rhodesian question at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference: 'He was patient and understanding and avoided all suggestion of having fixed or intolerant views.' Menzies concluded that there was therefore no reason

¹⁰³ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 13, Holyoake to Wilson, Cable No. 3156, 5 October 1965 (also in TNA: PRO, DO 183/676). Similarly, Menzies wrote: 'I am not attracted by the idea of sending a message or making a public statement after your conference has failed, assuming it does fail. I much prefer to send a direct message to Smith, without publicity, in the hope, however slight, that it may help him in the direction of reasonable conclusions.' NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 5, Menzies to Wilson, Cable No. O.31260, 5 October 1965.

¹⁰⁴ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 13, Holyoake to Smith, Cable No. 3155, 5 October 1965.

why the London negotiations should not be approached in a statesmanlike manner.¹⁰⁵ Pearson's message was very similar in tone. He advised Smith that he had no intention of expressing any detailed views on the negotiations, and emphasised the common heritage between Canada and Rhodesia. Pearson reminded Smith that Canada had attempted to maintain 'close and effective relations' by providing aid to Rhodesia, and was trying to appreciate Rhodesia's problems and the Rhodesian Government's approach to them. Pearson asked Smith 'to give very careful thought to all the consequences before taking any irrevocable step which could separate you from Britain, from Canada, and from other Commonwealth countries.'¹⁰⁶ In his replies to the Old Commonwealth Prime Ministers Smith assured them that the London negotiations had been undertaken with goodwill and in the hope of reaching a settlement, but if an agreement could not be reached he would do what was in Rhodesia's best interests. Smith expressed his hope that in the event of a UDI it would still be possible to maintain friendly relations with the Old Commonwealth and asked for a deferred judgment to see how the Rhodesian Government discharged its responsibilities towards the Rhodesian people.¹⁰⁷ When the London negotiations did break down, Pearson was quick to advise Wilson and Smith that in the event of a UDI it would not be possible for Canada to maintain normal relations of any kind with Rhodesia.¹⁰⁸ Holyoake released a press statement expressing New Zealand's

¹⁰⁵ NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 5, Menzies to Smith, Cable No. O.31259, 5 October 1965

¹⁰⁶ NAA: A1838, 190/11/1, Part 3, Pearson to Smith, Cable No. ME105, 4 October 1965.

¹⁰⁷ TNA: PRO, DO 183/674, Smith to Pearson, 9 October 1965; NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 5, Smith to Menzies, 9 October 1965; ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 13, Smith to Holyoake, 9 October 1965.

¹⁰⁸ TNA: PRO, DO 183/674, Pearson to Wilson, and Pearson to Smith, 12 October 1965.

disappointment at the failure of negotiations and warning of the ‘incalculable’ consequences if this were to be followed by a UDI.¹⁰⁹

Smith clearly hoped that in the event of a UDI it would be possible to maintain a diplomatic relationship with the Old Commonwealth. The private messages from and public statements by the Old Commonwealth Prime Ministers, though clearly warning Rhodesia of the consequences of a UDI, do not appear to have destroyed Smith’s illusions. A better way to disabuse Smith of his misplaced hopes would perhaps have been to orchestrate a truly joint approach by Pearson, Menzies and Holyoake. This would at least have given the impression of Old Commonwealth solidarity on the Rhodesian issue (even though this was not actually the case). Yet the New Zealand Prime Minister took the opposite view, advising Wilson: ‘In the past, I recall, the Rhodesians have referred somewhat scathingly to what they regard as evidence of the Old Commonwealth acting in concert and it may perhaps have been that the joint approach has tended to lessen our influence.’¹¹⁰ Canadian officials also expressed their concern that the Rhodesian Government might interpret the separate but simultaneous approaches by Canada, Australia and New Zealand ‘as evidence of carefully planned collaboration.’¹¹¹

The final Old Commonwealth initiative that may have had a potential deterrent effect upon the Rhodesian Government (though it was not conceived in such terms) came

¹⁰⁹ NAA: A1838, 370/1/26, Australian High Commission, Wellington, to DEA, Canberra, Cable No. 495, 11 October 1965.

¹¹⁰ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 13, Holyoake to Wilson, Cable No. 3156, 5 October 1965 (also in TNA: PRO, DO 183/676).

¹¹¹ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 13, New Zealand High Commission, Canada, to Secretary of External Affairs and Prime Minister, Wellington, Cable No. 576, 5 October 1965.

during the hiatus in the final stages of negotiations between the British and Rhodesian Governments. Upon learning of Smith's rejection of a proposed Royal Commission, Lester Pearson telephoned Harold Wilson to discuss the possibility of a Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting to consider action in the event of a UDI. They agreed that a Commonwealth meeting would be useful to limit the damage to the Commonwealth and to prevent the matter from getting out of hand at the United Nations.¹¹² British officials recognised that it would be advantageous in terms of demonstrating positive action in the context of the Commonwealth, which could head off proposals for more extreme courses of action. On the other hand there were several disadvantages: Rhodesia was primarily a British responsibility; a meeting 'would provide a splendid forum for the Africans' to bring maximum pressure to bear on the British Government; an initiative could fail (as had the attempted mediation over Vietnam); if the matter were before the United Nations it could confuse the issue; and many Commonwealth Prime Ministers would be unwilling or unable to attend at short notice.¹¹³ Indeed, the New Zealand and Australian Governments objected for a number of reasons, some of which had already been anticipated by British officials: the Commonwealth had no legal standing in the matter; a meeting would be used by African Prime Ministers to urge extreme courses of action, including military intervention, which Australia and New Zealand would not countenance; and as the decision on action to be taken in the event of a UDI rested with Britain, each Commonwealth government would wish to consider its own actions in the light of measures adopted by Britain.¹¹⁴ These were logical arguments, especially since

¹¹² TNA: PRO, DO 183/674, 'Confidential Note for the Record: Rhodesia', 19 October 1965.

¹¹³ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181880, 'Commonwealth consultation in the event of a UDI', CRO Memorandum, October 1965.

¹¹⁴ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 14, 'Commonwealth conference on Rhodesia', Memorandum by A. D. McIntosh, Secretary of External Affairs, to Keith Holyoake, 21 October 1965. NAA: A1838,

the British Government was known to oppose the use of force but had not made clear what measures it would take in the event of a UDI. Wilson was still considering the Canadian proposal when he made his decision to fly to Salisbury for one more round of negotiations.¹¹⁵ However, Wilson's personal diplomacy, combined with the reluctance of Australia and New Zealand, pushed the Canadian proposal into the background. Yet if Wilson had left instructions to prepare for a Prime Ministers' Meeting in the event of a UDI, he could have used this to bolster his position while he was in Salisbury, which might have created a pause in which the Rhodesian Government could reconsider its intended course of action. On the other hand the Rhodesian Government might well have accused the British Government of bad faith in its negotiations and pointed to arrangements for a Commonwealth conference as a justification for a UDI. The fact that the Rhodesian Government had consistently demonstrated little regard for Commonwealth opinion suggests that the latter response was more probable. Nevertheless, a Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting held before or immediately after a UDI could still have had some value in terms of signalling British and Commonwealth determination to deal swiftly with a UDI. It would also have avoided the situation that later transpired in which Wilson agreed only reluctantly to Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's invitation to attend a Commonwealth meeting in Lagos.¹¹⁶

The efforts of Britain and the Old Commonwealth to deter Rhodesia from a UDI failed for two major reasons. First, the Rhodesian Government did not believe that if it declared

190/11/1, Part 4, Australian High Commission, Wellington, to DEA, Canberra, Cable No. 516, 22 October 1965; Sir Robert Menzies, Canberra, to Sir Alexander Downer, Australian High Commissioner, London, Cable No. 5882, 22 October 1965.

¹¹⁵ TNA: PRO, DO 183/674, Wilson to Pearson, Cable No. 2532, 21 October 1965.

¹¹⁶ See Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, pp. 215-19.

independence it would threaten the fundamental interests of Britain and the Old Commonwealth. In terms of international security, Britain and, to a lesser extent, the Old Commonwealth, were concerned about the spread of Communism in Africa, but this did not threaten their immediate national security. In any event the Rhodesian Government was convinced that the 'White Redoubt' (Rhodesia, South Africa and the Portuguese colonies) was an effective barrier to the spread of Communism in Sub-Saharan Africa. In ideological terms, Britain and the Old Commonwealth professed that they were committed to democratic government and liberal freedoms, which the granting of independence was supposed to facilitate. The Rhodesian Government, however, believed that African majority rule would result in one party government in Rhodesia and recognised that the Australian and New Zealand Governments were sympathetic to Rhodesian concerns in this regard. In economic terms British interests in Rhodesia were well in excess of those of the Old Commonwealth. The only collective element of concern was the potential impact of a UDI on Zambia, whose copper production was essential to western defence contractors, but only the Canadian Government was actively involved in contingency planning to safeguard the Zambian economy. Overall, then, Britain and the Old Commonwealth struggled to persuade the Rhodesian Government that their fundamental interests – whether measured in terms of security, ideology, or economics – were at stake in the event of a UDI.

The second reason why deterrence did not work is that Britain and the Old Commonwealth failed to develop threats that were credible or sufficiently potent to persuade the Rhodesian Government that they meant business. Britain and the Old Commonwealth coordinated their diplomatic warnings to some degree, but they did not act jointly, partly because of divergence in their views and partly because they did not

want the Rhodesian Government to feel that the Old Commonwealth was conspiring against it. This perhaps reduced the impact of the warnings delivered by Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand individually. Britain and the Old Commonwealth ruled out the use of force, which meant that they could only make (usually vague) pronouncements about the dire political and economic consequences that would follow a UDI. Warnings were sent reluctantly, especially by Australia and New Zealand, and were received with regret by the Rhodesian Government, but they did not unduly concern Ian Smith and his ministers. They felt that their exclusion from the Commonwealth would be nothing more than symbolic and calculated that economic sanctions would have little effect because Rhodesian trade with the Old Commonwealth was in any case limited. The efforts of Britain and the Old Commonwealth to deter Rhodesia from a UDI therefore lacked much sense of credibility or potency.

The dilemma of representation

One of the major arguments advanced in this thesis is that structural problems complicated the management of the Rhodesian Crisis, and this is no less true of the Commonwealth aspects than it is of the British domestic policy-making process or Britain's relations with the United States.¹¹⁷ The political and diplomatic channels of communication through which the Commonwealth aspects of the Rhodesian problem were managed were complex. They involved periodic consultation between the British Prime Minister and the Prime Ministers of Canada, Australia and New Zealand; personal communication between the Old Commonwealth Prime Ministers and the Rhodesian Prime Minister; regular consultation between British officials and their Canadian,

¹¹⁷ See above, Ch. 1, and below, Ch. 6.

Australian and New Zealand counterparts; meetings between Rhodesian representatives and Old Commonwealth officials; and multilateral contacts in the context of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meetings (which is discussed in the next chapter). Rhodesia's constitutional status as a self-governing colony was somewhat ambivalent but it was definitely not an independent member of the Commonwealth. As such, Rhodesian external affairs were the responsibility of the British Government and Salisbury had no constitutional right to enter into diplomatic relations with independent members of the Commonwealth or other sovereign states (though it did attempt to defy this convention). The Rhodesian High Commission in London and the British High Commission in Salisbury served as the main channels of communication between British and Rhodesian Governments and there were no equivalent forms of bilateral representation between Rhodesia and any other state. As suggested above, this did not mean that there was a complete absence of diplomatic links between Rhodesia and other members of the Commonwealth. For example, the Canadian High Commission in London liaised with the Rhodesian High Commission, Rhodesian representatives who were attached to the British Embassy in Washington made periodic visits to Ottawa, Canadian diplomats occasionally visited Rhodesia, and there was also a Canadian Trade Commission in Salisbury. Similar arrangements pertained to Australia, though it did not place the same degree of emphasis on diplomatic links with Rhodesia that Canada did. New Zealand had no form of representation in Salisbury at all and did not attempt to cultivate a regular diplomatic relationship with Rhodesia (which reflected the fact that New Zealand's material interests in Africa were so limited that it did not justify the costs of representation), though it did receive information from the Rhodesian Government, which it sought to verify through other channels.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ For example, in November 1964 the Rhodesian High Commissioner in London wrote to his New

All of this had different significance for the parties to the Rhodesian problem. The Rhodesian Government argued that because Canada, Australia, and New Zealand lacked sufficient diplomatic representation in Salisbury, they did not have an accurate picture of local conditions and therefore could not formulate a valid opinion about Rhodesian claims to independence on the basis of the 1961 Constitution. The Canadian, Australian and New Zealand diplomatic establishments sometimes felt that they lacked first-hand information, but the main concern, in Ottawa especially, was that without sufficient representation in Salisbury they were unable to exert influence on a regular basis. Britain and the Old Commonwealth were also conscious of the fact that the limited diplomatic links between Rhodesia and the Old Commonwealth could be interpreted by Salisbury as a lack of genuine concern with the Rhodesian problem. Yet the Old Commonwealth was, of course, faced with an obvious dilemma. If they had augmented the status of their representation in Salisbury it might have facilitated better relations with the Rhodesian Government, but at the same time it would have poisoned relations with the African members of the Commonwealth, who would have undoubtedly condemned the Old Commonwealth for colluding with the European minority in Rhodesia. The dilemma of representation is therefore an excellent illustration of the difficulties associated with the management of the Rhodesian problem.

Zealand counterpart: 'In view of the manner in which the machinery of government in Rhodesia has been widely misrepresented, I am enclosing a booklet which sketches in outline some important background considerations that are all too often overlooked.' ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 10, Evan Campbell to Sir Thomas Macdonald, Letter, 11 November 1964. Macdonald forwarded the booklet, 'Southern Rhodesia: Advance to Maturity', to his Prime Minister and suggested that he could check the information against the first hand impressions of the party of New Zealand MPs who had attended the *indaba* in Rhodesia. Macdonald to Holyoake, Letter, 13 November 1964.

The ineffectual nature of Canadian representation in Salisbury acquired a farcical quality that did not sit well with the seriousness of the Rhodesian problem. In July 1964 the British High Commissioner in Salisbury commented on the incongruity between Canadian interest in a satisfactory outcome to the Rhodesian problem and the lack of effective Canadian representation in Salisbury:

Until earlier this year their only representative was a Trade Commissioner [Lester Glass] of the most useless kind of near-pensioner it is possible to imagine. So far as I can ascertain he does no work to speak of, and certainly takes no part in local life whatsoever. He is a semi-invalid, and his wife apparently a total invalid – at least she has never appeared in public and I have never met her. I have seen him once this year (Canada Day), and twice last – the first at the Armistice Day ceremony, when he forgot his wreath, and the second when the diplomats took formal leave of Sir Roy Welensky, when he was a quarter of an hour late!¹¹⁹

To be sure, the Canadian Department of External Affairs (DEA) was aware of the nature of this problem, which had been under review since the impending dissolution of the Central African Federation. Lester Glass was due to be replaced by a younger official, Ian Smyth, who was scheduled to arrive in Salisbury by January 1964 in readiness to take over as Trade Commissioner by the summer. Officials also recommended that a Foreign Service Officer (FSO) should be attached to the Canadian Trade Commission in Salisbury for a number of reasons. First, it was important for Canada to establish a way of obtaining objective and reliable views on the Rhodesian problem. This would ensure that

¹¹⁹ TNA: PRO, DO 183/317, J. B. Johnston, Salisbury, to Sir Saville Garner, CRO, Letter, 24 July 1964.

Canada was properly informed in the event that she was called upon to attend a Commonwealth conference on the Rhodesian question, or to make statements at the United Nations, where the issue had intensified since the independence of Kenya and Zanzibar. Second, it would be a useful means by which to establish regular contact with African nationalists. Third, because external aid to Rhodesia was likely to increase, it would be helpful to have a FSO in Salisbury to administer the programme. Finally, as Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia were both scheduled to attain independence in 1964, it would be useful to accredit Canadian representatives in Salisbury to the newly independent states.¹²⁰

The Canadian Government treated this recommendation with caution because it coincided with a request from the Rhodesian Government to exchange accredited diplomatic representatives.¹²¹ This was obviously an attempt by the Rhodesian Government to subvert the constitutional convention that the British Government had responsibility for the conduct of Rhodesian external affairs, but the Canadian DEA did not dismiss the idea out of hand. In a meeting on 4 March 1964 it was suggested that there might be some advantage in securing the appointment of a Rhodesian High Commissioner in Ottawa, since this would allow the Canadian Government to exercise some influence on the Rhodesian Government to refrain from a UDI. However, it was also recognised that it would have serious drawbacks in terms of Canada's relations with African members of

¹²⁰ NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, 'Attachment of Foreign Service Officer to Trade Commissioner's Office, Salisbury', Memorandum by R. G. Hatheway, AMED, DEA, to Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 24 December 1963.

¹²¹ NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, Canadian Embassy, Washington, to DEA, Ottawa, Cable No. 390, 30 January 1964. The Rhodesian Government proposed that Oliver Bennett be formally accredited to Ottawa and that the Canadian Ambassador to South Africa be accredited to Salisbury.

the Commonwealth, 'since they would undoubtedly look on it as an Old Commonwealth gesture of support for the present white government in Salisbury.' The Canadian Government therefore declined the Rhodesian invitation to exchange diplomatic representatives on the basis that: 'It is Canadian practice to use the title of High Commissioner only for representatives of independent members of the Commonwealth and that we do not think that the present circumstances would justify our making an exception in the case of Southern Rhodesia.'¹²² A similar desire to avoid gestures of encouragement to the Rhodesian Government was probably behind the Canadian Government's decision not to attach a FSO to its Trade Commission in Salisbury. Instead, Ian Smyth took on the task of political reporting, and according to the British High Commissioner Smyth quickly 'got into local confidence and the local picture extremely well.'¹²³

One incident that Smyth reported in June 1965 is worth recounting because it illustrates the nature of Canadian-Rhodesian diplomatic relations at the routine level. Smyth advised his superiors that he had been called in to see M. B. Benoy, the Permanent Secretary of the Rhodesian Ministry of External Affairs, to answer questions about a recent visit to Salisbury by N. H. F. Berlis, the Canadian High Commissioner in Tanzania. Benoy, who referred to a letter from the British South Africa Police, wanted to know why the High Commissioner had not presented himself officially to the Rhodesian Government, and why he had visited two well-known African nationalists. Smyth explained that the visit was unofficial and personal but Benoy 'virtually demanded to be

¹²² NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, DEA, Ottawa, to Canadian Embassy, Washington, Cable No. ME 95, 11 March 1964.

¹²³ TNA: PRO, DO 183/317, J. B. Johnston, Salisbury, to Sir Saville Garner, CRO, Letter, 24 July 1964.

told what had been discussed at the meetings and suggested that perhaps Mr Berlis had been acting as a “courier”.’ Smyth gave a ‘short and sharp’ reply to the effect that he was not prepared to tolerate such a line of questioning and Benoy withdrew the accusation. Smyth reported that Benoy was in fact a close personal friend and had later told Smyth that ‘he had been “put up” to the interview by certain Ministers.’ Smyth commented that the episode showed that either Berlis or more likely the African nationalists had been under police surveillance, and referred to a previous report in which he had advised that ‘our mail is still opened, our telephone tapped and, periodically, I am followed by various Rhodesian security personnel.’¹²⁴ Smyth’s letter not only confirms that by mid-1965 Rhodesia had become a police state, but also demonstrates that the Rhodesian Government treated Canadian diplomats with contempt. This was at variance with the Rhodesian objective of establishing an enhanced diplomatic relationship with the Old Commonwealth, and appears even more incomprehensible given that Rhodesia was by this time in receipt of technical assistance from Canada.

Australian diplomatic representation in Salisbury was even more limited than that of the Canadian Government. Australia had maintained a Trade Commission in Salisbury since December 1954, but in 1963 the Department of Trade decided to reassign its Trade Commissioner to another post. Administration of Australian trade interests was left in the hands of a locally recruited Englishman who was designated as a Marketing Officer.¹²⁵

In September 1963 Winston Field wrote to Sir Robert Menzies enquiring whether

¹²⁴ NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.2, Ian R. Smyth, Acting Canadian Trade Commissioner, Salisbury, to T. L. Carter, AMED, DEA, Ottawa, Letter, 16 June 1965.

¹²⁵ NAA: A1838, 190/10/6, Part 1, ‘Australian Trade Commissioner, Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia’, Memorandum by R. L. Harry, First Assistant Secretary, Division IV, DEA, Canberra, 17 January 1964, para. 1.

Australia might open a diplomatic mission in Salisbury in order that Australia could be better informed on the Rhodesian problem (but it was also, no doubt, an attempt to obtain de facto recognition). The Australian Government made no reply but official opinion suggested that sufficient information could be obtained from the Australian Ambassador in South Africa, Australian High Commissions in Africa, and material circulated by the British and Rhodesian Governments.¹²⁶ A senior External Affairs official who visited Salisbury advised his Minister that Field had again raised the question of Australian representation. In reviewing the situation the official recognised the same dilemma that faced the Canadian Government: on the one hand, it would probably be politically disadvantageous in terms of African opinion; but on the other hand, it would be useful to have better representation in Salisbury to handle technical assistance and immigration matters. He concluded that 'For these purposes, the maintenance of the Trade Commission, if properly staffed from Australia, would provide a suitable answer.'¹²⁷ The Minister for External Affairs therefore requested the Department of Trade to appoint a suitably qualified officer to Salisbury.¹²⁸ However, the Department of Trade did not feel that it could accommodate the request because Australian trade with Rhodesia was stagnant and its staffing resources for overseas posts were inadequate, so it shunted responsibility back to External Affairs.¹²⁹ Against this background of bureaucratic unwillingness to accept responsibility, the Rhodesian Government once again asked if it would be possible to send a diplomatic representative to Salisbury. The Australian

¹²⁶ Ibid., para. 2.

¹²⁷ Ibid., para. 3.

¹²⁸ NAA: A1838, 190/10/6, Part 1, Sir Garfield Barwick, Minister for External Affairs, to J. McEwen, Minister for Trade and Industry, Letter, 6 February 1964.

¹²⁹ NAA: A1838, 190/10/6, Part 1, N. H. D. Henty, Acting Minister for Trade and Industry, to Sir Garfield Barwick, Minister for External Affairs, Letter, 16 March 1964.

Ambassador to South Africa opined that this would probably not accomplish a great deal, 'although it might make the Southern Rhodesia authorities feel rather less isolated inside the old Commonwealth.'¹³⁰ Yet this was precisely the point, and the Department of External Affairs ought to have apprehended the value of maintaining one of its officers in Salisbury not only for the purpose of gathering information, but also to signal a clear interest in the Rhodesian problem and to establish a clear line of communication with Salisbury. However, External Affairs advised its Embassy in South Africa that it had decided to maintain the status quo, partly due to the impending Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting and partly because 'Mr Smith's emergence as Prime Minister has made the situation a little different'.¹³¹ One consequence of this decision was that in the absence of first-hand reports from Salisbury, the Department of External Affairs would have relied to a great extent on political reports from its Ambassador to South Africa who, as noted in the preceding chapter, was very sympathetic to the Europeans in Rhodesia. It would perhaps be going too far to suggest that this shaped Australian policy on the Rhodesian issue, but it certainly reinforced it.

Diplomatic representation has four major functions: achievement of statehood; contact and communication; promotion, explanation and defence of national interests; and acquisition of information.¹³² The Rhodesian Government undoubtedly aimed at the first and third functions in its exchanges with Canada and Australia, whereas the Canadians and Australians were concerned with the second and fourth functions. Ottawa and

¹³⁰ NAA: A1838, 190/10/6, Part 1, J. C. G. Kevin, Australian Ambassador to South Africa, to DEA, Canberra, Letter, 12 June 1964.

¹³¹ NAA: A1838, 190/10/6, Part 1, Charles Lee, DEA, Canberra, to Australian Embassy, Pretoria, Letter, 3 July 1964.

¹³² R. P. Barston, *Modern Diplomacy* (London: Longman, 1988), pp. 18-19.

Canberra were attuned to the different emphasis that the Rhodesian Government was attempting to place on its diplomatic representation, which presented the Canadians and Australians with a delicate situation. Ottawa was not prepared to exchange accredited representatives with Salisbury, nor even to augment the staffing of its Trade Commission, because this could easily be construed as showing approval of Rhodesian policies. Only if the Rhodesian Government implemented progressive policies would Canada be disposed to review its policy.¹³³ The Australian Government, which was aware of Canadian policy on representation, was also cognisant of the political disadvantages that would follow any decision to augment its representation in Salisbury. However, Australian policy appears to have been guided less by concern for African opinion than consideration of staffing costs in the Departments of External Affairs and Trade. The cautious approach adopted by Canada and Australia on the problem of representation was understandable, but it did not maximise their opportunities to exert influence in Salisbury and possibly signalled a lack of interest in the Rhodesian problem.

Old Commonwealth contingency plans and initial responses to UDI

Although the threat of a UDI was just below the surface on several occasions during 1964 and 1965, the Old Commonwealth remained in the dark about the details of Britain's likely response until just days before the Rhodesian Government issued its illegal declaration. This was because British ministers had resolved to take firm decisions only in the light of the circumstances that prevailed at the time of a UDI, so British officials could not communicate much useful information to their Old Commonwealth

¹³³ NAA: A1838, 190/10/6, Part 1, L. G. Sellars, Acting Australian High Commissioner, Ottawa, to DEA, Canberra, Letter, 26 June 1964.

counterparts about British intentions in the event of a UDI. This generated some friction between the British and Canadian Governments because the Canadians were anxious to be taken into British confidence. By contrast the Australians and New Zealanders tended to take a more relaxed approach to contingency planning, which reflected their overall reluctance to impose economic sanctions against Rhodesia in the event of a UDI.

Canada

The Canadian Government gave urgent consideration to contingency planning against a UDI at three junctures during the Rhodesian crisis: in October 1964, when the British Government issued its warning statement against the consequences of a UDI; in the period February–May 1965, when it appeared to the Canadians that the effects of the warning statement had worn off and the Rhodesian Government was again preparing for a UDI; and between September and November 1965, when the fruitless Anglo-Rhodesian negotiations brought the prospect of a UDI much closer. Unlike the Australian and New Zealand Governments, the Canadian Government was also involved in ongoing consultation with the British and Americans to safeguard Zambian copper production in the event of economic warfare between Rhodesia and Zambia.¹³⁴

During the first period of discussion, in October 1964, Canadian officials recognised that the Canadian Government would be obliged to take action against Rhodesia ‘especially in light of any British moves’, and would also need to take action ‘if the UN becomes seized

¹³⁴ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 11, New Zealand High Commission, Ottawa, to DEA, Wellington, Cable No. 62, 18 February 1965, para.4; Part 12, New Zealand High Commission, Ottawa, to Secretary of External Affairs, Wellington, Letter, 8 June 1965.

of the issue'.¹³⁵ Suggested actions included: non-recognition of an illegal regime; withdrawal of Commonwealth preferences (though it was noted that this would have little economic effect on Rhodesia); and withdrawal of the Canadian Trade Commissioner (though it was felt that it might be valuable to retain some presence in Salisbury for consular purposes to assist Canadian citizens).¹³⁶ Officials determined that if the Rhodesian question were brought before the UN Security Council and the Council decided to take action under Article 41 of the Charter, Canada would be committed to that decision.¹³⁷ This immediate willingness to accede to a resolution in Chapter VII terms was characteristic of Canadian foreign policy and stood out in contrast to British, Australian, and New Zealand concerns about UN action. Canadian officials were, however, concerned that the imposition of trade sanctions against Rhodesia could set a precedent for similar action against South Africa, and 'would of course be contrary to the long-standing and moderate Canadian policy of non-interference with trade for political reasons.' In the event of a UDI it would therefore be necessary to distinguish between South Africa and Rhodesia by stressing that the latter was 'a rebellious and illegal government.'¹³⁸

As Canadian officials began to study the implications of action against Rhodesia, Paul Martin approached the British Government to request details of the measures that it

¹³⁵ NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2 SR, Part 1.1, 'Record of Discussion on Southern Rhodesia', by L. M. Berry, AMED, DEA, 28 October 1964, para. 2.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 8.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 10.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, paras. 11-12; and 'Southern Rhodesia – Possible UDI – Canadian Interests', Memorandum by Tom Carter, AMED, DEA, 28 October 1964.

intended to implement in the event of a UDI.¹³⁹ Arnold Smith also approached the British High Commission in Ottawa, but was told that no firm answers could be given on the points of detail that he raised.¹⁴⁰ This was the beginning of a pattern of exchanges between the Canadian and British Governments. The Canadian sense of urgency about consultation receded temporarily after it became clear that Ian Smith had backed away from a UDI. The Canadian Government also felt more at ease because the British ministerial visit to Ottawa facilitated brief consideration of the Rhodesian issue, and the Commonwealth Relations Office instituted a practice of periodic consultation with the Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand High Commissioners in London.¹⁴¹ From February 1965, however, Canadian anxiety became heightened as a result of Ian Smith's posturing. Paul Martin wrote to Arthur Bottomley advising that because 'a Rhodesian move might come very suddenly' the Canadian Government was drawing up contingency plans for immediate action, including withdrawal of Commonwealth preferences:

It would be helpful to our thinking if you could let us know whether you have drawn up plans of this nature. Would you cut off preferences on Rhodesian tobacco and subject it to the general tariff? Are you considering other measures, such as freezing Rhodesian sterling balances, treatment of Rhodesia as outside the sterling area and prevention of private

¹³⁹ TNA: PRO, DO 183/317, Martin to CRO, Cable No. ME448, 28 October 1964.

¹⁴⁰ TNA: PRO, DO 183/317, E. J. Emery, British High Commission, Ottawa, to A. Smith, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Letter, 9 November 1964.

¹⁴¹ TNA: PRO, CAB 133/266, Prime Minister's Visit to USA and Canada, December 1964; DO 183/317, Record of Conversation between Arthur Bottomley and Paul Martin, 9 December 1964; NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 4, Australian High Commission, London, to DEA, Canberra, 'Liaison Between HMG and Old Commonwealth', Cable No. 8426, 4 December 1964.

financial transactions with Rhodesia which have been mentioned in public discussion of the economic consequences of a unilateral declaration of independence?¹⁴²

Martin's questions demonstrate that the British Government had not yet communicated anything specific to the Canadian Government. Yet this was not surprising given that the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee had the matter under review at that precise moment, and had to address not only contingency measures against Rhodesia but also the Zambian aspects of the Rhodesian problem, the forthcoming visit of the Commonwealth Secretary to Rhodesia, and Rhodesian complaints about subversion fostered by neighbouring Commonwealth countries.¹⁴³ Against this background Bottomley advised that he would arrange for an exchange of views with the Canadian Government once he had returned from Rhodesia.¹⁴⁴ No substantive exchange took place until May, but even then British officials noted that: 'In the absence of a decision by Ministers in advance of [a UDI] on the economic measures the British Government would take against Rhodesia

¹⁴² TNA: PRO, DO 183/674, Paul Martin to Arthur Bottomley, Letter, 18 February 1965 (also in FO 371/181876).

¹⁴³ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, OPD (65) 6th Meeting, 29 January 1965, OPD (65) 10th Meeting, 17 February 1965; CAB 148/19, OPD (65) 22, 'Southern Rhodesia: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations', 27 January 1965; OPD (65) 23, 'Zambian Copper: Note by the Secretary', 27 January 1965; OPD (65) 27, 'Southern Rhodesia – Relations with Neighbouring Countries', Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations'; CAB 148/20, OPD (65) 40, 'Possible economic pressure against Southern Rhodesia. Note by the Secretary'; OPD (65) 41, 'Possible alternative coal and power supplies to Zambia. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations', 15 February 1965.

¹⁴⁴ TNA: PRO, DO 183/674, Arthur Bottomley to Geoffrey Murray, Canadian Deputy High Commissioner, London, Letter, 19 February 1965.

in that event, it will not be practicable for the Commonwealth Secretary to seek Canadian support for specific policies though we should be glad to know we can count on their general support.’¹⁴⁵ Bottomley could only advise that the British Government was not prepared to impose economic sanctions as such, but would withdraw preferences, place an embargo on tobacco, and exclude Rhodesia from the London capital market.¹⁴⁶ It cannot be coincidental that in a lengthy dispatch sent before the talks between Bottomley and Martin, the British High Commissioner in Ottawa noted that: ‘There are perhaps times when Canadian attitudes on international affairs seem tiresome to us: the perpetual demand to be consulted, the slightly “holier than thou” approach on thorny problems of which Canadian have little or no practical experience, a tendency to naivety and starry eyes in the approach to the newly independent nations.’¹⁴⁷ The Commonwealth Relations Office was no doubt irritated by the ‘perpetual demand to be consulted’ on the Rhodesian problem, especially since it was not in a position to divulge greater details of British policy in the event of a UDI until a very late stage.

In mid-September 1965 the Commonwealth Relations Office advised the Old Commonwealth High Commissioners in London that developments in the Rhodesian situation had taken a ‘serious down-turn’ and the British considered that the prospect of

¹⁴⁵ TNA: PRO, DO 183/674, ‘Brief for Secretary of State’s Meeting with Mr Paul Martin’, Rhodesia Department, CRO, May 1965, para. 3.

¹⁴⁶ TNA: PRO, DO 183/674, ‘Extract from a meeting between Mr Paul Martin and the Commonwealth Secretary’, 10 May 1965.

¹⁴⁷ TNA: PRO, DO 183/674, Sir Harry Lintott, ‘Canada’s Foreign Policy’, Dispatch No. 7, 3 May 1965, p. 9.

negotiating an acceptable solution was slim.¹⁴⁸ By the time of the London negotiations the Canadian Prime Minister had come to the conclusion that the Rhodesian Government was ‘under right wing domination and beyond influence.’¹⁴⁹ In those circumstances the Canadian Government would no doubt have been anxious to finalise the measures that it would take in the event of a UDI, and would have been relieved when it at last received firmer details of British contingency plans.¹⁵⁰ However, Canadian officials were still hesitant to recommend a trade embargo in the event of a UDI, not because of the costs to Canada but because of the principle of interfering with trade for political reasons.¹⁵¹ The Canadian Cabinet finally resolved the matter on 11 October, when it took decisions to withhold recognition of an illegal Rhodesian regime, withdraw its Acting Trade Commissioner from Salisbury, impose a complete arms embargo, suspend

¹⁴⁸ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 12, New Zealand High Commission, London, to DEA, Wellington, Cable No. 3130, 16 September 1965.

¹⁴⁹ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 13, New Zealand High Commission, Ottawa, to DEA, Wellington, Cable No. 576, 5 October 1965, para. 2.

¹⁵⁰ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/22, OPD (65) 132, ‘Contingency Planning in the Event of a Unilateral Declaration of Independence: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations’, 21 September 1965. The CRO supplied a revised copy of the paper to Canada, Australia, and New Zealand on 8 October 1965, but with the following warning: ‘This working level document is prepared for the secret information of the persons to whom it is communicated. It mentions certain decisions which have been taken by British Ministers, but on some of the matters with which it deals no such decisions have yet been reached. The document cannot, therefore, be taken as an indication of the magnitude of the likely reaction of the British Government to a UDI in Rhodesia.’ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 13, New Zealand High Commission, London, to DEA, Wellington, Cable No. 3509, 8 October 1965; NAA: A1838, 370/1/26, Part 1, New Zealand High Commission, London, to DEA, Wellington (rptd. Canberra), Cable No. 3510, 8 October 1965.

¹⁵¹ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 13, New Zealand High Commission, Ottawa, to DEA, Wellington, Cable No. 576, 5 October 1965, para. 3.

Commonwealth preferences, and refuse all aid and finance agreements.¹⁵² According to one senior official, these decisions were taken to establish Canada in a position ‘from which it could give a relatively moderate lead to Commonwealth Africans, rather than merely argue against possibly extreme African initiatives.’¹⁵³ It may therefore be observed that in its response to UDI the means of Canadian diplomacy were ultimately consistent with the objectives of Canadian foreign policy, despite some official reservations about the principles involved.

Australia

Canadian officials liaised extensively with their Australian counterparts throughout 1965, but they found little willingness in Canberra to discuss contingency plans. As noted in the preceding chapter, key Australian officials were as averse as their political masters to the possibility that they might have to impose sanctions against Rhodesia. The Australian Government was also keen to avoid any involvement in contingency planning to protect Zambia against the effects of a UDI.¹⁵⁴ However, the Australian Government’s response to Rhodesia’s UDI was eventually sufficiently robust to deflect any international criticism of Australian policy.

¹⁵² NAA: A1838, 190/11/1, Part 3, Australian High Commission, Ottawa, to DEA, Canberra, Cable No. 605, 12 October 1965.

¹⁵³ NAA: A1838, 190/11/1, Part 3, Australian High Commission, Ottawa, to DEA, Canberra, Cable No. 606, 12 October 1965, reporting the views of Tom Carter, AMED, DEA.

¹⁵⁴ NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 6, ‘Possible Action in the Event of a UDI’, DEA Memorandum, 5 November 1965.

By late September 1965, Britain, Canada and New Zealand were beginning to consider their contingency plans in some detail, but this was not the case in Australia. New Zealand officials in Canberra reported that it was ‘not thought likely that there will be much planning of Australian measures against the contingency of a UDI’, which reflected advice from the Attorney-General’s Department that the precise form of a UDI could not be predicted and without details of the British response Australian planning could not be taken very far. The Australian Government therefore did not intend to resume inter-departmental consultation ‘until UDI has ceased to be a contingency and has become a reality.’¹⁵⁵ The day after Rhodesia declared itself independent New Zealand officials advised Wellington: ‘As you would expect there is more than a little sympathy in some influential quarters of the Cabinet for the position of the Rhodesian Europeans, and Ministers have hitherto shown a marked reluctance to consider in advance of the event what action Australia should take in response to a Rhodesian UDI.’ The Cabinet had begun to discuss the issue seriously, but it had concluded that the Australian Government should not rush into an announcement of punitive measures.¹⁵⁶ In fact the only decision that the Australian Government made initially was to decline to finance or contribute physically to any use of force.¹⁵⁷ As far as economic measures were concerned, the Cabinet observed that the British Government would hope to receive Commonwealth co-operation, and the United Nations was bound to call for these as a minimum response. However, the Cabinet noted that economic measures were likely to have a greater impact on the African population in Rhodesia than the Rhodesian Government, and it was not

¹⁵⁵ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 12, New Zealand High Commission, Canberra, to DEA, Wellington, Cable No. 853, 27 September 1965.

¹⁵⁶ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 15, New Zealand High Commission, Canberra, to DEA, Wellington, Cable No. 1060, 12 November 1965.

¹⁵⁷ NAA: A5828/1, Vol. 4, Cabinet Decision 1373, 12 November 1965, p. 2.

clear that they would succeed in re-establishing a legal administration.¹⁵⁸ The Cabinet also recognised: ‘There is the further and important question of whether it is acceptable to the Australian people that there should be action by Australia against Rhodesia, especially in the light of our decisions not to place any measures on South Africa and our attitude to trade with Communist China.’¹⁵⁹ The Cabinet therefore decided to defer any decisions pending further developments.¹⁶⁰

Developments in the UN Security Council, where African and Asian countries were demanding military intervention, overturned the Australian Government’s hesitant response to UDI. ‘The Cabinet felt that the practical choice for all countries had now come down to a choice between supporting or acquiescing in military action and supporting economic measures. This points, in Australia’s case, to a programme of economic measures.’¹⁶¹ If Australia did not act it would not only create embarrassment at the United Nations, ‘but would make Australia unacceptably conspicuous as the one country, apart perhaps from South Africa and Portugal, not to take action.’¹⁶² Accordingly the Cabinet decided to ban the export of arms and military equipment to Rhodesia, to suspend tariff preferences, to ban the import of tobacco from Rhodesia (but with provision for the entry of shipments already in transit), to amend the Australian banking exchange regulations to exclude Rhodesia from the Sterling Area and to take

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁶¹ NAA: A5828/1, Vol. 4, Cabinet Decision 1374, 16 November 1965.

¹⁶² Ibid.

action to prevent evasion of exchange control measures, and to terminate the appointment of the Australian Trade Representative in Salisbury.¹⁶³

Menzies announced this programme of measures to the House of Representatives on the same day.¹⁶⁴ As noted in the previous chapter, the Government's policy was subjected to considerable debate, which revealed a substantial current of political opinion favourable to the Europeans in Rhodesia. Yet despite the fact that the Australian Government had only reluctantly decided to impose economic sanctions, Australia's international reputation was preserved by its robust response. For example, the Ghanaian Government had 'professed satisfaction with economic sanctions announced by Australia and said Ghana was lobbying in other non African states for a similar declaration.'¹⁶⁵ By contrast, New Zealand's response to UDI was subject to international criticism.

New Zealand

The New Zealand Government was apprised of British, Canadian, and Australian contingency planning (or lack of it) but did not itself address the implications of a UDI until the final stages of the Rhodesian Crisis. New Zealand officials then took an intensely legalistic approach to the issue, which retarded New Zealand's response to UDI. Britain and the wider Commonwealth interpreted New Zealand's hesitant response as

¹⁶³ NAA: A5828/1, Vol. 4, Cabinet Decision 1375, 16 November 1965.

¹⁶⁴ Summary of a Statement on Rhodesia by Sir Robert Menzies, House of Representatives, 16 November 1965, *The Parliamentarian*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (January 1966), pp. 93-95.

¹⁶⁵ NAA: A1838, 190/11/1, Part 5, Mr J. E. Ryan, Australian High Commissioner, Accra, to DEA, Canberra, Letter, 17 November 1965.

political reluctance to impose measures against Rhodesia, and this interpretation was perhaps justified given the evidence presented in the preceding chapter.

In late September 1965, a senior New Zealand official noted that the deterioration in relations between Britain and Rhodesia could prompt the latter to take some form of 'decisive action', but anticipated that instead of an outright UDI, 'it is more likely perhaps that Salisbury will attempt, through a series of unilateral acts, to assume independence gradually.'¹⁶⁶ This assumption was based on the recent Rhodesian effort to have their representative in Lisbon formally accredited.¹⁶⁷ It was argued that: 'Although there are numerous imponderables, this is a subject to which we should now be giving some careful thought.' In particular, the New Zealand Government would have to consider: the effects of a cessation of trade with Rhodesia; the amendment of legislation to permit

¹⁶⁶ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 12, 'Rhodesia: New Zealand Contingency Planning', Memorandum by T. C. Larkin, 28 September 1965.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. On 13 September the British Defence and Overseas Policy Committee (DOPC) noted that a Rhodesian representative, Mr Harry Reedman, was due to arrive in Lisbon two days later and the Portuguese Government had refused to give the British Government any assurance that Reedman would neither present diplomatic credentials nor be received in a diplomatic capacity. The DOPC considered referring the matter to the North Atlantic Council (as Portugal was a NATO ally) and Bottomley argued that the British Ambassador should be recalled from Lisbon. TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, OPD (65) 38th Meeting, 13 September 1965. The Canadians were worried because they did not know how to treat Reedman. ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 12, New Zealand High Commission, Ottawa, to DEA, Wellington, Cable No. 534, 21 September 1965; and NAA: A1838, 190/9/1, Part 2, Australian High Commission, Ottawa, to DEA, Canberra, Cable No. 183, 21 September 1965. In the House of Commons Michael Stewart asserted that Reedman's appointment was not in the capacity of 'accredited diplomatic representative'. *Hansard*, House of Commons Debates, Vol. 718, Col. 116, 1 November 1965. Cited in Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, p. 41.

withdrawal of Commonwealth preferences; the effects of a UDI on Rhodesia's membership of the Commonwealth, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and UN specialised agencies; and the question of recognition of a government in exile. A major concern was the possibility that the use of sanctions against Rhodesia could set a precedent for their use against South Africa.¹⁶⁸

Officials gave detailed consideration to the implications for New Zealand of a UDI and concluded that in some respects the position taken by the New Zealand Government would depend upon following British or international precedents. For example, in terms of the constitutional status of Rhodesia after a UDI, 'the choice for New Zealand will probably lie between regarding Rhodesia as a rebellious piece of Commonwealth territory or as an alien territory whose paternity is no longer acknowledged; and it is primarily for the British to say what is the situation.'¹⁶⁹ As far as tariffs were concerned, the New Zealand Government could withdraw Commonwealth preferences by Order in Council, but the GATT was an inhibiting factor because it imposed a legal obligation to place Rhodesia on the Most Favoured Nation Tariff (as opposed to the General Tariff) unless this were set aside by UN Security Council directive. Any embargo on trade would involve the same considerations.¹⁷⁰ The withdrawal of South Africa from the Commonwealth had shown that matters relating to Commonwealth agreements, such as telecommunications and merchant shipping, could be dealt with at leisure. When it came to membership of international organisations such as the GATT and UN specialised

¹⁶⁸ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 12, 'Rhodesia: New Zealand Contingency Planning', Memorandum by T. C. Larkin, 28 September 1965.

¹⁶⁹ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 12, 'Consequences for New Zealand of a Rhodesian UDI', DEA Memorandum, 30 September 1965, para. 1.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 2.

agencies, however, Rhodesia could only be excluded by collective international action.¹⁷¹

On the political side, officials noted that in keeping with previous announcements New Zealand would not be able to recognise an illegal Rhodesian Government, but beyond this commitment:

New Zealand is free to act as our conscience and interests dictate, although it is clear that in the broad context of our relations with Africa and with Asia we cannot fall too far behind in the sincerity and credibility of our response. In view of the very limited volume of New Zealand trade with Rhodesia, decisions of an essentially political character will be required to show our good faith.¹⁷²

Officials concluded that in addition to non-recognition of an illegal Rhodesian Government it would also be impractical to recognise a government in exile because that too would lack any constitutional basis.¹⁷³ If the United Nations imposed mandatory sanctions then the New Zealand Government would be obliged to comply, but up to this point it would be in New Zealand's interests to argue against their adoption because of the implications that this could have for relations with South Africa.¹⁷⁴ The Department of External Affairs therefore determined that New Zealand's response to a UDI 'should be a graduated one which would take account of the intentions and actions of other Commonwealth countries and the pressures which may develop within the UN.' Whilst

¹⁷¹ Ibid., paras 4 and 5.

¹⁷² ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 12, 'Rhodesia: Political Implications for New Zealand of a Unilateral Declaration of Independence', DEA Memorandum, 30 September 1965, p. 1.

¹⁷³ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 2-3.

New Zealand would support the British it had ‘no intention of undertaking more severe courses of action than they contemplate.’¹⁷⁵ Australian officials reported the New Zealand attitude more bluntly: they did not want to be ‘out in front’ on the Rhodesian issue and felt that ‘any action against Rhodesia would be unwelcome though in the event of a UDI some would have to be taken (including of course, non-recognition).’¹⁷⁶

When Rhodesia declared its independence unilaterally Keith Holyoake issued a press statement that action by New Zealand would be ‘determined after consultation with other Commonwealth countries and in light of discussions in the United Nations.’ The Secretary of External Affairs advised the Prime Minister that New Zealand could implement a number of measures including (in ascending importance) ‘an embargo on the export of strategic goods, the withdrawal of Commonwealth preference, the prohibition of Rhodesian tobacco imports and a complete trade embargo on all Rhodesian exports to New Zealand. The total severance of all trade between us would, of course, be a final step.’¹⁷⁷ McIntosh commented that there would be no advantage in taking measures more extreme than those implemented by Britain and the Old Commonwealth but New Zealand’s response would be monitored by the Commonwealth and at the United Nations: ‘Should we fall too far behind our fellow members of the Commonwealth we run a risk of provoking criticism and of impairing the concerted international efforts which are necessary to induce a change of heart in Rhodesia.’ McIntosh therefore recommended

¹⁷⁵ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 13, DEA, Wellington, to New Zealand High Commission, London, Cable No. 3187, 7 October 1965.

¹⁷⁶ NAA: A1838, 190/11/1, Part 4, Australian High Commission, Wellington, to DEA, Canberra, Cable No. 516, 22 October 1965.

¹⁷⁷ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 15, A. D. McIntosh to Holyoake, Memorandum, 12 November 1965.

that the minimum response of New Zealand should be: an embargo on strategic goods, which would have no economic significance but ‘considerable presentational value’; and removal of the British Preferential Tariff, which again would have no economic ramifications because the Most Favoured Nation and General Tariff rates were the same on tobacco (the only significant import from Rhodesia).¹⁷⁸ Only after Britain and Australia had announced more stringent economic measures did McIntosh recommend that the New Zealand Government should adopt a parallel response, including an embargo on Rhodesian tobacco.¹⁷⁹ However, Holyoake’s public statement on the issue demonstrated an unwillingness to go this far and a lack of understanding of the symbolic importance of sanctions. He questioned whether sanctions were effective, suggesting that they ‘are at any time an uncertain means of inducing any country to change its policies’, and observed that if sanctions were to have a chance of succeeding ‘they need to be widely supported and firmly sustained.’ Holyoake concluded that:

New Zealand is not in a position to add substantially to the action taken by other Commonwealth governments. Its trade with Rhodesia is small. It has no diplomatic or trade representative in Salisbury. Unlike Britain and Canada, it does not import Rhodesian sugar. The only possible practical measure open to New Zealand relates to tobacco. But since no more tobacco is likely to be bought until the sales next year an embargo by New Zealand at this stage has little real meaning.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 15, McIntosh to Holyoake, Memorandum, 17 November 1965.

¹⁸⁰ NAA: A1838, 190/11/1, Part 5, Australian High Commission, Wellington, to DEA, Canberra, Cable No. 549, 18 November 1965.

Holyoake's position drew criticism from Britain and the Commonwealth. At a meeting in London an official from the New Zealand High Commission was told that 'the British were surprised and disappointed with [the] cautious attitude adopted by Wellington over [the] matter of economic sanctions.'¹⁸¹ Similarly, Alhaji Obisesan, a Nigerian parliamentarian, was reported as saying that at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in December 1965 he would strongly criticise Holyoake's 'almost reluctant decision' to impose sanctions.¹⁸²

New Zealand was, like Australia, very reluctant to consider the ramifications of a UDI. When New Zealand officials did finally examine the legal, political, and economic issues associated with the various measures that might be required, it was decided that an incremental approach to dealing with a UDI would be in New Zealand's best interests. However, New Zealand's gradualist response did not impress the British Government or the African Commonwealth. It may therefore be argued that although the attitudes of officials and politicians in Wellington and Canberra towards the Rhodesian problem were very similar, the New Zealand response to UDI was not as effective as the Australian reaction.

¹⁸¹ NAA: A1838, 190/11/1, Part 5, Australian High Commission, London, to DEA, Canberra, Cable No. 10527, 22 November 1965.

¹⁸² NAA: A1838, 190/11/1, Part 5, 'Holyoake to get 'punch for timidity'', *Canberra Times*, 27 November 1965.

Conclusion

This chapter has noted that the Old Commonwealth faced several obstacles in its attempts to influence the Rhodesian Government from either a positive or negative perspective. Perhaps foremost among these was the fact that the Rhodesian Government denied the competence of Commonwealth states to discuss Rhodesia's internal affairs and to make suggestions for constitutional change in Rhodesia. It is also evident that the Old Commonwealth lacked credibility in its efforts to deter the Rhodesian Government from a UDI, which was a result of both subjective and objective factors. Sympathy in Australia and New Zealand for the Europeans in Rhodesia meant that they were not terribly enthusiastic about threatening the Rhodesian Government with reprisals in the event of a UDI, but such sympathy belied the truth that the Australian and New Zealand Governments would have little choice but to impose sanctions against Rhodesia in the event of a UDI. In any event, the Old Commonwealth and Rhodesia knew perfectly well that the threat of sanctions carried little weight because trade between Rhodesia and the Old Commonwealth was so limited. An additional factor that restricted the influence of the Old Commonwealth during the Rhodesian Crisis was its inadequate diplomatic representation in Salisbury. In this respect, however, the Canadians and Australians were confronted by an awkward dilemma, because any increase in the status of their representation could be misconstrued in Salisbury and the Commonwealth as approval of Rhodesian Government policy.

This chapter has also argued that opportunities to influence Rhodesia from a positive or a negative angle could have been pursued more vigorously. For example, on the positive side the Old Commonwealth had the resources to improve the socio-economic status of

Africans in Rhodesia, and thereby prepare them for majority rule. The British Government ought to have explored the possibility of greater collaboration with the Old Commonwealth in this regard and it stands out as a missed opportunity. The Old Commonwealth might also have exploited feelings of 'kith and kin' to increase confidence among European Rhodesians that the Commonwealth was a worthwhile association, and to convince them that they were not alone in their defence of 'standards', or their resistance to Communism in Africa. Further, the Old Commonwealth could have offered assisted passage schemes to Europeans who did not wish to remain in Rhodesia under African majority rule. From a negative perspective the Old Commonwealth might have given more effective warnings of the consequences that would follow a UDI, perhaps even hinting that they would not condemn any British threat to use force, though this would of course have been possible only if the British Government had been willing to give a lead to such an approach.

Chapter Five

The Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meetings and the Rhodesian Crisis

Introduction

The racial issues that were involved in the Rhodesian problem inevitably heightened the level of interest among the African and Asian Commonwealth states, which saw the Commonwealth as an important forum for discussion of the issue. The Rhodesian Government, however, denied that the Commonwealth had any competence to discuss Rhodesia's internal affairs, which reflected not only its insistence on the principle of domestic jurisdiction but also a general disdain for states north of the Zambesi. This placed the British Government in a difficult situation because by convention it reported to Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meetings on the constitutional progress of colonies that were moving towards independence, 'not as something for the meeting to decide but as something in which its members were closely interested.'¹ The Rhodesian problem made the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meetings of 1964 and 1965 (and beyond) potentially explosive affairs. In the period preceding the 1964 Meeting, Sir Alec Douglas-Home's Conservative Government had to deal with the delicate question of whether the Rhodesian Prime Minister should attend, which required careful consultation with the Commonwealth to avoid wrecking the Meeting. The Rhodesian question was a difficult feature of the 1964 Meeting, but the Commonwealth, though divided, remained intact. In the period leading up to the 1965 Meeting, Harold Wilson's Labour

¹ J. D. B. Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of Expansion and Attrition 1953-1969* (London: Oxford University Press for The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1974), p. 187.

Government was acutely conscious that its inability to negotiate a settlement and the threat of a UDI would lead to African and Asian demands to use force to impose a solution in Rhodesia. Once again, despite savage criticism of British policy and fears that the Commonwealth would disintegrate, it did not do so. The fact that the Commonwealth survived these Meetings relatively unscathed requires some explanation. First, it can be argued that Douglas-Home and Wilson presided over the Meetings with enough patience and skill to avert disaster. Second, it is clear that the Canadian Prime Minister helped to moderate criticism of British policy towards Rhodesia, which made it possible to compromise on the final communiqués. Third, and perhaps most significant, divisions among radical and moderate Commonwealth leaders – whose numbers increased between the 1964 and 1965 Meetings – meant that Douglas-Home and Wilson were not faced by an obdurate monolith of critical Commonwealth opposition.

Rhodesian resistance to Commonwealth interference

Between the break up of the Central African Federation and Rhodesia's UDI, the Rhodesian Government consistently resisted any Commonwealth involvement in, or advice about, Rhodesian constitutional politics. Yet whilst Rhodesian intransigence accorded with the formal constitutional position, it was at odds with the spirit of Commonwealth consultation and co-operation, as Bruce Miller has observed:

In strict legal terms, the advancement of colonies was Britain's business and no one else's; in political terms it was desirable that other Commonwealth members should concur in, and if possible applaud, the progress which Britain was making. If they could be associated in some

way in that progress – as India and Pakistan had been in preparing for the independence of the Sudan, and Australia, India, and Pakistan in that of Malaya – this was all to the good.²

The Rhodesian Government's unwillingness to countenance Commonwealth involvement in its affairs was motivated by attitudes towards the African Commonwealth that were similar to those of many Australian politicians and officials. In February 1964 Winston Field spoke disparagingly in the Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly of the Commonwealth African states, which were characterised by 'varying degrees of one-party dictatorship; some just flirting with communism, some obviously in love with communism, if not already married to it.' Field suggested that these states wanted to interfere in Rhodesian affairs to divert attention from their own poor administration and corruption.³ The following month Field made it clear to the British Government that for the Rhodesian Government the issue was 'not the impact on the Commonwealth which the grant of independence is likely to have but the preservation of our Constitution, which is essential to our freedom, against the efforts of international and Commonwealth forces to circumvent, and even suppress it.' Field went on to suggest that the 1961 Constitution was 'the very basis for the orderly political advancement of Africans' and for that reason Rhodesia's enemies regarded the Constitution as an obstacle. Field also observed 'There is no doubt that African Nationalism in this country is directed and financed by

² Ibid.

³ *Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates*, 26 February 1964. Quoted in Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, p. 190.

Communist countries.’⁴ Field’s public and private remarks reflected beliefs that were deeply embedded in the Rhodesian Front, which proved to be insurmountable obstacles to any possibility of Commonwealth engagement in the Rhodesian problem.

Ian Smith’s views about the Commonwealth were certainly no different to those of his predecessor. When Sir Alec Douglas-Home advised Smith that ‘the British Government, either alone or in conjunction with other Commonwealth Governments, will be glad to help in any way they can to bring about a generally acceptable solution’, Smith replied, ‘I must repeat, what my predecessor has already stated, that the issue of independence for Southern Rhodesia is a matter solely between the Southern Rhodesia Government and the British Government and that it is not the concern of any other Government in the Commonwealth or elsewhere.’⁵ Smith continued to profess that the Commonwealth had no jurisdiction; following the Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting in June 1965 he informed Harold Wilson: ‘frankly, I am not interested in what the other members of the Commonwealth say about our affairs, and what they do say will not turn us from what we consider to be the right thing to do in the interests of our country.’⁶ During the negotiations in London in October 1965 Smith emphasised another familiar theme when he remarked that there was no such thing as democracy in the countries to the north of

⁴ Field to Sandys, 3 March 1964, para. 2, Cmnd. 2807, *Southern Rhodesia: documents relating to the negotiations between the United Kingdom and Southern Rhodesian Governments November 1963 – November 1965* (London: HMSO, 1965), p. 13.

⁵ Douglas-Home to Smith, 20 May 1964, final para.; Smith to Douglas-Home, 24 June 1964, para. 8, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 16 and 19.

⁶ Smith to Wilson, 28 June 1965, para. 3, Cmnd. 2807, p. 62.

Rhodesia, and referred to the situation in Tanzania by way of illustration.⁷ When Wilson put it to Smith in later negotiations that the Commonwealth was ‘a valuable buttress against the spread of Communist influence in Africa and that it would be gravely damaged by a UDI’, Smith replied that ‘he had heard military experts argue the contrary view, in the sense that the best means of avoiding trouble in Africa or an international war would be to maintain the European influence in Rhodesia, if necessary by a UDI.’⁸

The Rhodesian Government never deviated from its views that the Commonwealth had no standing in the matter of Rhodesia’s claim to independence and that its African members were infected with Communism and were therefore enemies of Rhodesia.⁹ Many Europeans in Rhodesia no doubt shared these views. In September 1963 the Canadian High Commissioner in Tanganyika reported an editorial in the *Rhodesian Herald* that ‘talked about barbarism in some countries which are criticizing Southern Rhodesia.’ He remarked: ‘Livingstone is just across the border, but close enough to remind me of the saying about people who live in glass houses.’¹⁰ There was indeed much hypocrisy on both sides of the debate, and Bruce Miller has commented on the

⁷ ‘Record of a Meeting held at 10 Downing Street, 8 October 1965’, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 81-82. One commentator noted in 1967: ‘In Tanzania the concept of *Ujamaa*, derived from the sense of community of tribal life, is being radicalized into an assertion of modern socialism.’ Ali A. Mazrui, *Towards a Pax Africana. A Study of Ideology and Ambition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 97.

⁸ ‘Record of a Meeting held at Milton Buildings, Salisbury, 29 October 1965’, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 114-15.

⁹ Smith continued to condemn African dictatorship and corruption in his memoirs, *Bitter Harvest: The Great Betrayal and the Dreadful Aftermath* (London: Blake, 2001). See, for example, pp. 64-66.

¹⁰ National Archives of Canada, Ottawa [hereafter NAC]: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, N. F. H. Berlis, Canadian High Commissioner, Dar Es Salaam, to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, 16 September 1963, para. 10.

African Commonwealth: ‘Their lack of political stability made their complaints against South Africa and Rhodesia less acceptable than if parliamentary democracy had survived in Africa to the same extent as in the Caribbean Commonwealth countries or in India and Ceylon.’¹¹ Yet the obstinate refusal of the Rhodesian Government to admit that there was a genuine Commonwealth interest in the future of Rhodesia was a major obstacle to a more constructive approach to the problem of independence.

The 1964 Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting

Although Rhodesian ministers consistently opposed any Commonwealth interference in the issue of Rhodesian independence – and in doing so lost no opportunity to disparage the African members of the Commonwealth – they also claimed that Rhodesia was a member of the Commonwealth because Rhodesian representatives had, since 1932, attended Commonwealth meetings. Robert Menzies recalled in his memoirs that in June 1963 he had a long conversation about this in London with Jack Howman, the Rhodesian Minister of Internal Affairs, Local Government, and African Education. Menzies pointed out that it was a mistake to believe that Rhodesia was a member of the Commonwealth. Rhodesian representatives had never attended Commonwealth meetings as a matter of right and Rhodesia could not become a member of the Commonwealth without the approval of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting, which was unlikely so long as the Rhodesian franchise did not include the whole African population. Menzies observed that Howman was ‘genuinely surprised’ by this assessment, and Howman apparently suggested that the only recourse for Rhodesia’s critics was to move for Rhodesia’s expulsion from the Commonwealth, which he thought was unlikely despite the South

¹¹ Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, pp. 117-18.

African precedent.¹² Accordingly, Menzies wrote to Winston Field in an attempt to clear up this misapprehension, citing the original basis upon which a Rhodesian representative had been invited to attend the Imperial Economic Conference at Ottawa in 1932 ‘as an observer, with liberty by permission of the Conference, to speak at its full meetings and with a right to participate in the work of its Committees.’¹³ Yet despite Menzies’ verbal and written advice, the Rhodesian Government still continued to profess that it was already a member of the Commonwealth.¹⁴ In September 1963 Howman told Canadian officials and ministers ‘Southern Rhodesia is and always has been a member of the Commonwealth’ and ‘there could be no question of Southern Rhodesia applying for Commonwealth membership but, rather, a question of whether its membership would be denied it.’¹⁵ Howman suggested that ‘if other members of the Commonwealth made difficulties then it was time for the old members of the Commonwealth to stand up and support Southern Rhodesia’s right to full membership.’¹⁶

¹² Sir Robert Menzies, *Afternoon Light: Some memories of men and events* (London: Cassell, 1967), pp. 216-17.

¹³ Secretary of State for the Dominions to Sir Cecil Rodwell, Governor of Southern Rhodesia, 3 December 1931. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 217.

¹⁴ Probably to make a case for the exchange of accredited representatives, the difficulties of which were examined in the preceding chapter.

¹⁵ NAC: RG 25, Vol. 10071, 20-1-2-SR, Part 1.1, ‘Meeting with Mr J. H. Howman, Minister of Internal Affairs for Southern Rhodesia’, [on 12 September 1963], Memorandum by R. G. Hatheway, African and Middle Eastern Division [hereafter AMED], Department of External Affairs [hereafter DEA], Ottawa, 19 September 1963, para. 4.

¹⁶ ‘Visit to Ottawa by Mr J. H. Howman, Minister of Internal Affairs, Local Government and African Education of Southern Rhodesia, Sept. 12-13 1963’, Memorandum by D. B. Hicks, AMED, DEA, Ottawa, 21 October 1963, para. 2.

Thus, on the one hand Rhodesian ministers dismissed the relevance of the Commonwealth, but on the other hand they professed their membership of the Commonwealth and sought to enlist the support of the Old Commonwealth against Rhodesia's African critics. During the period between the dissolution of the Central African Federation at the end of 1963 and the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting in July 1964, the African members of the Commonwealth became increasingly attentive to the issue of Rhodesian independence, particularly as a result of Ghanaian initiatives. In July 1963 the Ghanaian Government sent a note to the British Government, which, *inter alia* urged Britain to suspend the 1961 Constitution and re-establish direct rule over Rhodesia (as Britain had done in Malta in 1936), and warned that Ghana intended to raise the issue of Rhodesian independence in the United Nations Security Council. The Ghanaian Government breached convention by simultaneously sending copies of the note to other Commonwealth governments, which so angered the British Government that it did not reply.¹⁷ In August 1963 the Ghanaian Government did bring the question before the Security Council, in an effort to prevent the British Government from handing over the military assets of the Central African Federation to the Rhodesian Front Government. Although the Ghanaian initiative was unsuccessful it nevertheless publicised the issue of Rhodesian independence by 'shedding light on the internal political, constitutional, social, and economic developments of the territory to an extent unknown in many world capitals.'¹⁸ It has also been argued that British attempts to drive a wedge between Ghana and the other African states enhanced Ghana's prestige.¹⁹ Ghana was therefore

¹⁷ Olajide Aluko, 'The Role of Ghana in the Rhodesian Question, 1961-66', *Quarterly Journal of Administration*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (April 1972), p. 311.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

¹⁹ W. Scott Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy 1957-66* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 391.

encouraged to maintain pressure on the British Government. In February 1964, reports in the British press suggested that at least 100 Conservative MPs favoured an immediate grant of independence to the Rhodesian Government on the basis that the recent army mutinies in East Africa proved Africans were incapable of governing themselves.²⁰ The Ghanaian High Commissioner in London, Kwesi Armah, wrote to Duncan Sandys admonishing that if there was any truth in these rumours it would be 'a travesty of justice and morality of the highest order.'²¹ Ghana also engaged in a further public controversy that broke out just weeks before the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting, which concerned the right of the Rhodesian Government to be represented at the Meeting.

In April 1964 Sir Alec-Douglas Home announced that the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting would be held in London in July. Shortly thereafter he was asked in the House of Commons whether the Rhodesian Prime Minister would be invited to the Meeting. Douglas-Home replied that only Prime Ministers of fully independent Commonwealth countries had a right to attend, and any invitation to the Prime Minister of a country that was not independent could only be extended after consultation with other Commonwealth countries. Accordingly, Douglas-Home had asked Smith if he wished the Commonwealth to be so consulted, but Smith had replied that he did not because he believed he was entitled to attend as of right. Smith had been asked to reconsider his position.²² The Ghanaian High Commissioner had already stated that his

²⁰ Aluko, 'The Role of Ghana in the Rhodesian Question', p. 311; and Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, p. 191, n. 1.

²¹ *Ghana Today*, 26 February 1964. Cited in Aluko, 'The Role of Ghana in the Rhodesian Question', p. 311.

²² *House of Commons Debates*, 30 April 1964, cols. 583-584. Cited in Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, pp. 191-92.

government was 'astounded' by the suggestion that Smith might attend, and warned that it would not participate in the Meeting if that were the case.²³ The Indian Government had also indicated its opposition to Smith's attendance.²⁴

Smith, however, did ask to be invited and the British Government therefore initiated consultation on this issue with the Old Commonwealth representatives in London and directly with their Prime Ministers. Sir Saville Garner, the Permanent Undersecretary at the Commonwealth Relations Office, emphasised to the High Commissioners of Australia, New Zealand and Canada that an invitation to Rhodesia to attend the Prime Ministers' Meeting would be conditional upon the prior endorsement by all Commonwealth Prime Ministers, and that there was no precedent by which the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia should be invited automatically. They were told that the British Government was anxious to obtain the views of the Old Commonwealth before requesting the formal advice of the other Commonwealth Prime Ministers.²⁵ Douglas-Home wrote to Pearson, Menzies, and Holyoake, acknowledging that there were advantages and disadvantages associated with Rhodesian attendance at the Meeting. On the one hand, if the Rhodesian problem was going to be discussed it would be fair if Smith was present, and if an invitation was not extended it could lead to resentment in Rhodesia. On the other hand, there were procedural implications associated with Smith's attendance, because colonies that were already scheduled for independence (such as Northern Rhodesia) or enjoyed self-government (such as Malta, British Guiana, and

²³ *The Times*, 25 April 1964, cited in Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, p. 192; and *Ghana Today*, 6 May 1964, cited in Aluko, 'The Role of Ghana in the Rhodesian Question', p. 312.

²⁴ *The Guardian*, 28 April 1964. Cited in Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, p. 192.

²⁵ National Archives of Australia, Canberra [hereafter NAA]: A1838, 190/11/1, Part 1, Sir Eric Harrison, Australian High Commissioner, London, to Sir Robert Menzies, Canberra, Cable No. 2863, 6 May 1964.

Barbados) might ask to attend. More significantly, there was likely to be strong opposition to Smith's attendance: Ghana and India had already objected, and it was likely that other newly independent members of the Commonwealth would do the same. Newer members of the Commonwealth who did not object would probably have the intention of putting Smith 'in the dock'. Douglas-Home feared that in such circumstances 'the question of Southern Rhodesia would be so highlighted by the press that it would overshadow all else, and would thus present the world with an altogether distorted picture of our Prime Ministers' Meetings.' The British Prime Minister therefore concluded that it would be in the best interests of Rhodesia and the Commonwealth if Smith did not attend, but invited comments from Pearson, Menzies, and Holyoake.²⁶

Australian officials were concerned that if Menzies 'places his weight on one side or the other at the present juncture, it might sharpen the controversy' and therefore advised 'the Prime Minister should not positively take sides on the substantive issue but should point to the need to continue the search for a compromise.'²⁷ Menzies was apparently already thinking along these lines.²⁸ In his reply to the British Prime Minister Menzies suggested that Smith should make himself available for informal discussions in London outside the Prime Ministers' Meeting, which he thought 'would be not only fair but also of considerable value.'²⁹ The major concern of the New Zealand Government was that 'the invitation question should not be allowed to divide Commonwealth members nor provide

²⁶ NAA: A1838, 190/11/1, Part 1, 'Southern Rhodesia and the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting', text of a message from Sir Alec Douglas-Home to Sir Robert Menzies, 5 May 1964.

²⁷ NAA: A1838, 190/11/1, Part 1, 'Southern Rhodesia: Presence at Prime Ministers' Conference', Memorandum by M. R. Booker, First Assistant Secretary, Division IV, DEA, 6 May 1964.

²⁸ NAA: A1838, 190/11/1, Part 1, Foreign Minister's hand written minute on Booker's Memorandum.

²⁹ NAA: A1838, 190/11/1, Part 1, Sir Robert Menzies to Sir Alec-Douglas-Home, 7 May 1964.

any of them with an excuse for flamboyant gestures of disapproval.’ It thought that Smith’s attendance would not confer ‘any advantages which outweigh the risks of a serious dispute’ and sought to avoid making any public statement on the issue because it would ‘merely serve to bring Smith’s attendance even more within the realm of public controversy and give credence to the existence of a crisis within the Commonwealth.’³⁰ The attitude of the Canadian Government is less clear due to lack of documentary evidence. Bruce Miller suggests that Canada was ‘strongly opposed’ to Rhodesian attendance,³¹ but it appears that opinion in Ottawa was actually divided. Some officials were in favour of inviting Smith to the Meeting on the basis that failure to do so could be interpreted as a signal that the Commonwealth had no role to play in the Rhodesian question.³² Yet it was clear to Douglas-Home that there was no support among the Old Commonwealth for Smith to attend the Prime Ministers’ Meeting, and by the end of May Pakistan and Kenya had also made their opposition clear.³³ In June the British Prime Minister told the House of Commons that the consensus of Commonwealth opinion was that because of the size of Commonwealth, only representatives of fully sovereign states should attend the Prime Ministers’ Meeting.³⁴ Douglas-Home thus attempted to avoid

³⁰ Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga, Wellington Office [hereafter ANZ]: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 9, DEA, Wellington, to New Zealand High Commission, London, Cable No. 1074, 5 May 1964.

³¹ Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, p. 192, n. 5.

³² ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 9, J. S. Reid, New Zealand High Commissioner, Ottawa, to DEA, Wellington, 15 June 1964.

³³ *Daily Telegraph*, 26 May 1964. Cited in Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, p. 192.

³⁴ *House of Commons Debates*, 3 June 1964, cols. 239-240. Cited in Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, p. 192.

antagonising Smith by justifying the outcome of the whole issue in strictly procedural terms. Smith, however, did not see it that way, and declared:

We are excluded now not because we are no longer loyal to the Crown or to the ideals on which the Commonwealth was founded. Nor was our case judged on its merits. We are excluded because the Commonwealth has outgrown itself and there is no longer room for us among the motley of small countries which have recently acceded to independence and been admitted to the Commonwealth without regard to their adherence to the ideals and concepts on which it was founded.³⁵

One commentator suggested that, ‘The snub to Smith cut the ground from under the feet of such men as Whitehead who were pleading for restraint and no UDI, and united the Rhodesians behind Smith’s Government.’³⁶ This may be true, but the British Government had managed to defuse a potentially explosive problem that could have wrecked the Prime Ministers’ Meeting before it even began. Miller also observes that it prevented a direct clash between Smith and the Commonwealth African Prime Ministers similar to the confrontation that had led to the withdrawal of South Africa from the Commonwealth in 1961.³⁷ Yet the Meeting itself was still bound to be difficult, as the New Zealand Government advised its High Commission in London: ‘Whatever illusions the British may cherish, it seems to us that Southern Rhodesia will inescapably be the

³⁵ *The Times*, 8 June 1964. Quoted in Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, p. 192; and Kenneth Young, *Rhodesia and Independence* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1967), p. 139.

³⁶ Young, *Rhodesia and Independence*, p. 139.

³⁷ Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, p. 192.

central and pressing preoccupation of the Afro-Asian members at the Conference.³⁸ There were certainly signs that this would be the case. Ghana surreptitiously attempted to convene a meeting of African Commonwealth Foreign Ministers in Lagos to discuss the Rhodesian issue in advance of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting. When it was apparent that Nigerian support for this proposal was not forthcoming the Ghanaian Government sent out emissaries to propose a meeting in Accra.³⁹ These initiatives were not successful but the African members of the Commonwealth did gather in London on the eve of the Prime Ministers' Meeting to discuss Rhodesia.⁴⁰ Ghana also published several hundred copies of a pamphlet entitled *Britain's Responsibility in Southern Rhodesia*, the significance of which 'lay in the fact that it represented a direct appeal by the Ghana Government over and above the British Government to the British public and the organizations shaping public opinion in Britain.'⁴¹

The Old Commonwealth formulated similar contingency plans for dealing with the strain that the Rhodesian question was sure to impose on the Prime Ministers' Meeting. Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand officials anticipated the demands that African Prime Ministers would most likely articulate. They would call upon Britain to implement the provisions of United Nations resolutions requiring the release of political prisoners in Southern Rhodesia, suspension of the 1961 Constitution, and the convening of a constitutional conference representative of all political parties and races to draft a new

³⁸ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 9, DEA, Wellington, to New Zealand High Commission, London, Cable No. 1074, 5 May 1964.

³⁹ NAA: A1838, 190/11/1, Part 1, B. G. Dexter, Australian High Commission, Accra, to DEA, Canberra, Cable No. 119, 6 May 1965.

⁴⁰ Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, p. 194.

⁴¹ Aluko, 'The Role of Ghana in the Rhodesian Question', p. 312.

constitution based on ‘one man one vote’, which would lead to early independence.⁴² Australian officials suggested that these objectives were not practical, and anticipated that African members of the Commonwealth would be realistic enough to recognise this. It was therefore likely that the African Prime Ministers would at a minimum seek an endorsement of the principle of racial equality as the foundation of the Commonwealth, and a statement that independence would not be granted to Rhodesia until that principle was given effective constitutional expression.⁴³ Old Commonwealth officials accepted that such minimum expectations should be met,⁴⁴ but did not advance any common constitutional proposals for discussion at the Prime Ministers Meeting, which reflected their belief that this was a matter for negotiation between Britain and Rhodesia.⁴⁵ There was also no consensus about the utility of aid and technical assistance as a means to facilitate African advancement in Rhodesia and induce a more co-operative attitude on the part of the Rhodesian Government.⁴⁶

⁴² NAC: MG 31-E47, Vol. 66, ‘Southern Rhodesia’, Confidential Brief, 26 June 1964, para. 2; ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 9, ‘Southern Rhodesia’, Confidential Brief, 29 June 1964 Section 2 (A); NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 3a, ‘Southern Rhodesia’, Confidential Brief, [n.d. but June 1964], p. 3.

⁴³ NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 2, ‘Southern Rhodesia’, Secret Brief [n.d. but June 1964], p. 2.

⁴⁴ NAC: MG 31-E47, Vol. 66, ‘Southern Rhodesia’, Confidential Brief, 26 June 1964, para. 15; ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 9, ‘Southern Rhodesia’, Confidential Brief, 29 June 1964, Section 4; NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 2, ‘Southern Rhodesia’, Secret Brief [n.d. but June 1964], p. 3; and A1838, 190/10/1, Part 3a, ‘Southern Rhodesia’, Confidential Brief, [n.d. but June 1964], p. 1.

⁴⁵ Unusually, Australian officials did make some suggestions, specifically a Bill of Rights to guarantee the rights of Europeans and reservation of a number of seats in the legislature for members of non-African minority groups. NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 2, ‘Southern Rhodesia’, Secret Brief, [n.d. but June 1964], p. 3.

⁴⁶ See above, Ch. 4, pp. 194 ff.

The Prime Ministers' Meeting played out very much as the Old Commonwealth officials had anticipated in their briefing papers.⁴⁷ The final communiqué recognised that it was not a function of the Commonwealth to act as an arbiter in disputes between member countries but the Prime Ministers agreed that, 'Commonwealth countries could play a role of conciliation and, where possible, consider using their good offices to help towards the settlement of disputes between member nations provided the parties concerned accepted such mediation.' The Prime Ministers welcomed the British announcement that sufficiently representative institutions were a precondition of Rhodesian independence and that a UDI would not be recognised. Some Prime Ministers expressed the view that a constitutional conference should be convened, attended by leaders of all parties in Southern Rhodesia, in order 'to seek agreement on the steps by which Southern Rhodesia might proceed to independence within the Commonwealth at the earliest practicable time on the basis of majority rule.' The communiqué appealed for the release of all detained African leaders and called upon all leaders and their supporters to refrain from violence. The communiqué affirmed the Prime Ministers' belief that the best interests of all parties lay in developing confidence and co-operation based on tolerance, mutual understanding and justice. The communiqué recognised the necessity of giving confidence to the minority in Southern Rhodesia that their interests would be protected. Finally, the communiqué recorded the fact that the British Prime Minister undertook to give

⁴⁷ For a discussion of the proceedings see Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, pp. 194-95. Even though the meetings were conducted in private the press was able to report the proceedings in great detail because – as Menzies noted – many speeches were passed to the media before they were delivered at the meetings. NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 3a, 'Press, Radio and Television Conference given by the Prime Minister, The Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Menzies, at Canberra on Sunday, 19th July 1964', p. 4.

consideration to the views expressed but emphasised that the British Government was solely responsible for bringing Southern Rhodesia to independence.⁴⁸

According to Miller, ‘The final communiqué reflected the gap between Britain and the Africans’, but ‘Britain could be said to have come well out of the ordeal.’⁴⁹ This is a fair assessment, but the outcome requires some explanation, particularly in light of the fact that there was such a notable build up of tension in the months preceding the Prime Ministers’ Meeting. Some credit should certainly be given to Sir Alec Douglas-Home, who presided over the meetings with considerable patience despite the hostile atmosphere. Menzies commented that the British Prime Minister ‘was tactful; he enlivened the proceedings from time to time with a little humour if things threatened to become a little tense and he was, whenever firmness was required on the part of the United Kingdom, admirably firm.’⁵⁰ Menzies, on the other hand, contributed to the tension for three reasons: firstly, he opposed discussion of the Rhodesian problem on the basis of the domestic jurisdiction principle; secondly, he made his concern for the rights of the Europeans in Rhodesia very clear, particularly the right of Ian Smith to defend himself against his accusers; and thirdly he pointed out that some African Prime Ministers who advocated ‘one-man-one-vote’ and the release of political prisoners in Rhodesia actually presided over one-party government and imprisoned their own political opponents.⁵¹ Thus, according to one reporter’s informant, Menzies demonstrated that he

⁴⁸ NAC: MG 31-E47, Vol. 66, Cmnd 2441, *Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting 1964: final communiqué* (London: HMSO, 1964).

⁴⁹ Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, pp. 195 and 196.

⁵⁰ NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 3a, ‘Press, Radio and Television Conference given by the Prime Minister, The Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Menzies, at Canberra on Sunday, 19th July 1964’, p. 1.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-4; and Menzies, *Afternoon Light*, pp. 190-91 and 219-20.

was 'more British than the British'!⁵² However, Lester Pearson helped to offset the antagonism between Menzies and the African Prime Ministers. The Canadian Prime Minister instigated the inclusion of a declaration on racial equality in the final communiqué and toned down the passages that dealt with Rhodesia.⁵³ It may therefore be argued that a combination of Alec Douglas-Home's patience and Lester Pearson's creativity explain the reasonable outcome of the Prime Ministers' Meeting.⁵⁴

A further point that is worth considering in connection with the outcome of the 1964 Meeting is the significance of the proposal for a Commonwealth Secretariat. The idea of a central organisation for coordinating the activities of the Empire-Commonwealth was by no means new, having come up as early as the 1907 Colonial Conference.⁵⁵ In the months leading up to the 1964 Prime Ministers' Meeting Douglas-Home had indicated that he wanted to see a more cohesive Commonwealth and had put forward a number of proposals for greater cooperation, especially in terms of economic development. At the Meeting he suggested several schemes for functional cooperation, including a proposal for a Commonwealth Foundation to foster the development of professional links (this

⁵² The *Guardian*, 16 July 1964, report by Patrick Keatley. Quoted in Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, p. 195.

⁵³ Aluko, 'The Role of Ghana in the Rhodesian Question', p. 312; Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, pp. 195 and 196; and Young, *Rhodesia and Independence*, p. 143.

⁵⁴ It may be argued that it was a reasonable outcome for the British Government because it avoided making commitments that it would be unable to discharge, but it was also a reasonable outcome for the Commonwealth as a whole because it averted a bitter split.

⁵⁵ S. R. Ashton and Wm. Roger Louis (eds.), *British Documents on the End of Empire Project* [hereafter BDEEP] *Series A, Volume 5, East of Suez and the Commonwealth. Part I: East of Suez* (London: The Stationery Office, 2004), Introduction, p. lxxxii.

came into existence in 1966). However, Douglas-Home's suggestions were overtaken by proposals from Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Milton Obote of Uganda, and Eric Williams of Trinidad, for a central organisation capable of facilitating conciliation, cooperation and coordination.⁵⁶ According to one British newspaper the members of the Old Commonwealth were surprised by this development, as the newer members had rejected previous similar proposals from the Old Commonwealth as 'neo-colonial'.⁵⁷ The 1964 Meeting endorsed the proposal for a Commonwealth Secretariat but did not decide what structure or functions the Secretariat should have, leaving these issues to be worked out by a committee of senior officials chaired by Sir Burke Trend, the British Cabinet Secretary.⁵⁸ Over the next eighteen months politicians and officials in Britain and Australia became increasingly concerned about the 'proper' role of the Secretariat, especially in the context of Rhodesia's UDI.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, in July 1964 the Old Commonwealth responded favourably enough; even Robert Menzies commented publicly that the decision to establish a permanent Secretariat was 'quite a remarkable achievement and a very powerful answer to the pessimists.'⁶⁰ By accepting the proposal

⁵⁶ Stephen Chan, *The Commonwealth in World Politics. A Study of International Action 1965 to 1985* (London: Lester Crook, 1988), p. 7; Joe Garner, *The Commonwealth Office 1925-1968* (London: Heinemann, 1978), pp. 351-52; Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, pp. 397-98; Arnold Smith, *Stitches in Time: The Commonwealth in World Politics* (New York: Beaufort Books, 1983), p. 4.

⁵⁷ *Observer*, 12 July 1964. Cited in Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, p. 398.

⁵⁸ Chan, *The Commonwealth in World Politics*, p. 23; and Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, p. 399.

⁵⁹ See, for example, The National Archives [hereafter TNA]: Public Records Office, Kew [hereafter PRO], CAB 148/17, OPD (64) 12, 'Commonwealth Secretariat', Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 11 December 1964; NAA: A1838, TS 190/11/1/1, exchanges between DEA, Canberra, and Australian High Commission, London, 22-23 December 1965.

⁶⁰ NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 3a, 'Press, Radio and Television Conference given by the Prime Minister, The Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Menzies, at Canberra on Sunday, 19th July 1964'.

for a Secretariat the Old Commonwealth had perhaps done enough to demonstrate that they were sensitive to the concerns and interests of the Afro-Asian members. This may well have persuaded some of the newer members of the Commonwealth to give Britain the benefit of the doubt over its Rhodesian policy, at least for the time being.

Finally, a key reason why the 1964 Prime Ministers' Meeting did not dissolve into bitter acrimony was the fact that there were divisions among the African Prime Ministers about how hard a line to take. The Ghanaian proposal for a meeting of African Foreign Ministers in advance of the Prime Ministers' Meeting had received a cool response from Sierra Leone and from Nigeria, who had argued that African Commonwealth states should not adopt a separate position on a matter that concerned the Commonwealth as a whole.⁶¹ Between the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meetings of 1964 and 1965 expressions of indignation on the Rhodesian question grew even louder. It is surely significant that the number of Commonwealth Prime Ministers increased during the same period, which further multiplied rivalries and divisions (especially among African leaders), allowing the British Government and the Commonwealth to survive relatively unscathed once again.

The 1965 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting

In February 1965 Harold Wilson announced that a Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting would be held in London in June.⁶² There was little point in re-opening the

⁶¹ NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 2, 'Southern Rhodesia', Secret Brief, [n.d. but June 1964], p. 1.

⁶² *House of Commons Debates*, 4 February 1965, cols. 1280-1283. Cited in Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, p. 198.

question of Smith's attendance, though Smith issued a statement deploring the fact that he was once again excluded.⁶³ However, the period leading up to the Meeting was not without controversy, both public and private. The 1965 Meeting was the first attended by Kenneth Kaunda, President of Zambia. It is noted elsewhere in this thesis that Zambia presented the British Government with an awkward dilemma in the management of the Rhodesian Crisis.⁶⁴ Whilst the British Government was engaged in negotiations with Rhodesia, it hoped that Zambia would do nothing to provoke Rhodesia. The British Government was therefore dismayed to learn that the Rhodesian Government had 'made representations to the Government of Zambia concerning the training of saboteurs and the harbouring of terrorists in that country for use against Rhodesia.'⁶⁵ Wilson questioned Kaunda about these allegations whilst he was in London for Winston Churchill's funeral. Kaunda denied everything, which, as one Foreign Office official wrote, 'is awkward as we know Kaunda was not telling the truth.'⁶⁶ Wilson advised Smith that Kaunda had

⁶³ Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, p. 199.

⁶⁴ Britain was heavily involved in, and dependent upon, Zambian copper production, which would be threatened by economic warfare between Zambia and Rhodesia in the event of a UDI. Britain therefore tried to do everything possible to avoid provoking Rhodesia into a UDI, but also formulated contingency plans in conjunction with the United States and Canada to preserve Zambian supplies of copper if a UDI did occur and relations between Zambia and Rhodesia deteriorated. For details of Anglo-American contingency planning to support the Zambian economy see below, Ch. 6, pp. 316 ff.

⁶⁵ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181876, Ian Smith to Harold Wilson, 25 January 1965. Smith also made similar allegations against Tanzania, but the Rhodesian High Commissioner in London subsequently indicated doubts about this. See also TNA: PRO, CAB 148/19, OPD (65) 27, 'Southern Rhodesia - Relations with Neighbouring Countries', Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 27 January 1965.

⁶⁶ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181876, Minute by John Wilson, West and Central Africa Department [hereafter WCAD], Foreign Office, 26 January 1965.

given a ‘firm personal rebuttal’ and suggested that the Rhodesian Government should discuss the matter directly with Zambia, and perhaps agree that a third party should investigate the situation.⁶⁷ Fortunately, this delicate situation – which could have caused a great deal more trouble for the British Government in advance of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting – did not come to anything. By March, Kaunda was seeking to moderate the position of other African governments, which reflected Kaunda’s recognition of the damage that was likely to be inflicted on the Zambian economy in the event of a UDI.⁶⁸

Since the Wilson Government came into office it had been trying to establish a meaningful dialogue with the Rhodesian Government. In January 1965 Wilson persuaded Smith to accept a visit by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations and the Lord Chancellor and the Rhodesian Cabinet agreed that this would take place the following month.⁶⁹ Arthur Bottomley and Lord Gardiner did not achieve anything dramatic, but in fairness they were not seeking to do so, as Jack Johnston, the British High Commissioner in Rhodesia, acknowledged: ‘The political situation imposed limited but important objectives – to re-establish a dialogue with the Government; to correct false ideas of British policies; to combat the move to a unilateral declaration of independence

⁶⁷ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181876, Harold Wilson to Ian Smith, CRO Cable No. 239, 18 February 1965, p. 2.

⁶⁸ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, Minutes of OPD (65) 13th Meeting, 5 March 1965, p. 4. Presumably, Kaunda’s attitude had been shaken by the pessimistic conclusions of the early British and American contingency plans to support the Zambian economy in the event of a UDI.

⁶⁹ Smith to Wilson, 5 February 1965; and Wilson to Smith, 8 February 1965, Cmnd. 2807, pp. 56-57.

(u.d.i.); and to assess public opinion.’⁷⁰ The Bottomley-Gardiner mission may be said to have succeeded within its limited objectives,⁷¹ but it did not satisfy Commonwealth opinion, especially as there were some unwelcome developments in Rhodesian domestic politics.

At the end of March Ian Smith announced that a general election would be held on 7 May. Kenneth Young suggested that although a general election was not due, there was nothing sinister about the dissolution of the Rhodesian Legislative Assembly:

Smith believed that it was important that the electorate, which had not voted since the time of Federation, should have an opportunity to give or refuse to give the Government a fresh mandate. In particular he wished to have a two-thirds majority in the [Assembly] because this would strengthen his hand in negotiations between him and the British Government. He said that it was his intention to place before the electorate a considered analysis of all the reports received from various bodies consulted on the question of a UDI. But he could assure the public that such a step was not contemplated while negotiations continued.⁷²

⁷⁰ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181877, ‘Rhodesia: Visit by the Secretary of State and the Lord Chancellor’, British High Commissioner in Rhodesia to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 6 April 1965, p. 1. See also TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, Minutes of OPD (65) 13th Meeting, 5 March 1965, pp. 3-4.

⁷¹ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181877, ‘Rhodesia: Visit by the Secretary of State and the Lord Chancellor’, British High Commissioner in Rhodesia to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 6 April 1965, pp. 7-8.

⁷² Young, *Rhodesia and Independence*, p. 194.

Unsurprisingly, some members of the Commonwealth did not feel reassured about the intentions of the Rhodesian Government. For example, a few days after the dissolution proclamation, the Indian chargé d'affaires sent a message to Governor Humphrey Gibbs that the Indian Government considered this to be a prelude to a UDI and was therefore terminating its diplomatic representation in Salisbury.⁷³ The Nigerian Government also regarded the announcement of elections in Rhodesia as a precursor to a UDI and suggested to the British Government that it should call a constitutional conference, even if the Rhodesian Government resisted the proposal.⁷⁴ There was further cause for alarm on 26 April, when the Rhodesian Government issued a White Paper entitled 'Economic Aspects of a Declaration of Independence'. This sought to reassure the Rhodesian electorate that the benefits of a UDI would outweigh its potential costs, and that British threats to impose economic sanctions were not serious or practical. Although powerful economic interest groups in Rhodesia publicly countered this optimistic assessment, and despite the fact that Harold Wilson made a parliamentary statement warning Rhodesia against a UDI, the Rhodesian Front nevertheless won a landslide election victory.⁷⁵ It has been suggested that because the Soviet Union failed to obtain support for a UN Security Council resolution demanding that Britain revoke the Rhodesian elections, 'The signs, it

⁷³ Alan Megahey, *Humphrey Gibbs: Beleaguered Governor* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), p. 95.

⁷⁴ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181877, Sir F. Cumming-Bruce, British High Commissioner, Lagos, to CRO, Cable No. 499, 1 April 1965. On 13 April, Derrick March, WCAD, minuted that the Nigerian suggestion was hard to understand because the convening of a constitutional conference was likely to provoke a UDI, not prevent it.

⁷⁵ James Barber, *Rhodesia: The Road to Rebellion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), Ch. 12; Elaine Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), pp. 35-37; Young, *Rhodesia and Independence*, pp. 196-203.

seemed, were set fair for the 1965 Prime Ministers' Meeting.'⁷⁶ However, it is difficult to agree with this assessment given that Kwame Nkrumah – the most outspoken Commonwealth critic of Britain's policy towards Rhodesia – accused Britain of failing to discharge its obligations to the African population of Rhodesia.⁷⁷ The actions and statements of Commonwealth members during April and May were bound to heighten tension within the Commonwealth, and the British Government had to consider what it could do to persuade its Commonwealth partners that it had the situation under control. Wilson first looked at whether he might obtain Commonwealth support for the British Government's negotiating strategy based on the Five Principles,⁷⁸ but when it became clear that this did not have the utility that Wilson hoped for, he came up with a tactic designed to deflect criticism on the Rhodesian issue: a proposal for a Commonwealth initiative to end the Vietnam War.

Harold Wilson believed that the Five Principles were not only a means by which to progress negotiations with the Rhodesian Government, but would also have presentational value at the forthcoming Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting. In May he suggested to the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee (DOPC) that he should try to obtain the agreement of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers on the Five Principles but avoid any detailed discussion of how they should be implemented.⁷⁹ In fact, Wilson

⁷⁶ Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, p. 199.

⁷⁷ Aluko, 'The Role of Ghana in the Rhodesian Question', p. 313.

⁷⁸ See above, Ch. 1, pp. 51-53.

⁷⁹ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, Minutes of OPD (65) 26th Meeting, 19 May 1965, p. 4.

had already corresponded with the Old Commonwealth Prime Ministers on this subject.⁸⁰ Menzies and Pearson thought that the Five Principles provided a good basis on which to proceed with negotiations, but Pearson was not optimistic that the Five Principles would gain much support at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting because they did not raise the possibility of convening a constitutional conference, which had been mentioned in the 1964 final communiqué.⁸¹ A few days before the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting the DOPC acknowledged this same point. It was suggested that one possible method of reducing pressure on Britain over the Rhodesian issue might be to set up a Commonwealth Consultative Committee for the whole of Southern Africa, including South Africa and the Portuguese territories. On the other hand, it was acknowledged that this could alienate the Portuguese Government, whose assistance would be needed to alleviate Zambia's difficulties in the event of economic conflict with Rhodesia.⁸² Thus, Wilson faced the unwelcome prospect of attending the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting armed with little to combat criticism of British policy on Rhodesia. It was at this juncture that Wilson 'decided to turn the situation to his own advantage by conceiving the idea of a Commonwealth peace mission' to Vietnam.⁸³

⁸⁰ NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 4, Wilson to Menzies, Pearson, and Holyoake, 23 April 1965. Wilson made it clear that he was reluctant to put the Five Principles to Smith during the Rhodesian election campaign in case Smith sought the endorsement of the electorate to reject them.

⁸¹ NAA: A1838, 190/10/1, Part 4, Menzies to Wilson, 4 May 1965; and Pearson to Wilson, 3 May 1965. Canadian officials were also sceptical about the acceptability of the Five Principles to the Commonwealth Prime Ministers. See NAC: MG 31-E47, Vol. 66, 'Rhodesia', Confidential Memorandum, 7 June 1965, pp. 4-5.

⁸² TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, Minutes of OPD (65) 29th Meeting, 16 June 1965, p. 6.

⁸³ John W. Young, 'The Wilson government and the Davies peace mission to North Vietnam, July 1965', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (1998), p. 549.

In his diaries Richard Crossman recorded that by mid-1965 he had become so worried by the Vietnam situation that he decided to raise the issue in Cabinet: ‘But it fell flat. This was mainly because, with the Commonwealth Conference just starting, Harold was able to say that a big initiative was now on the way – and he didn’t want to say anything about it for obvious reasons.’⁸⁴ Wilson consulted Derek Mitchell (his Principal Private Secretary) and Oliver Wright (his Foreign Office Private Secretary) before asking the Foreign Office to work out the details of the scheme.⁸⁵ When the Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting opened on 17 June, Wilson convened a restricted meeting to discuss his proposal, and was successful in obtaining general approval.⁸⁶ Crossman suggested that he only came to know the details of Wilson’s scheme when he saw Robert Menzies congratulating Wilson on television, just two days after Crossman had raised his concerns about Vietnam in Cabinet. Crossman was unimpressed by the ‘political matiness and gimmickry of the proceedings’.⁸⁷ He was also worried that Wilson would be absent for up to a month as a result of the ‘stunt’ and was therefore relieved when it failed as a result of Communist opposition. After the Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting Crossman discussed with Wilson the failure of the peace initiative. Wilson apparently told

⁸⁴ R. H. S. Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister Volume 1: Minister of Housing 1964-66* (London: Hamilton and Cape, 1975), p. 250, entry for Tuesday 15 June.

⁸⁵ A multi-member Commonwealth delegation would visit Hanoi, Peking, Saigon and Washington, and would talk with the International Control Commission (Canada, India and Poland), which had been set up to oversee the implementation of the 1954 Geneva agreements. Young, ‘The Wilson government and the Davies peace mission to North Vietnam, July 1965’, p. 549; and Harold Wilson, *The Labour Governments 1964-1970: A Personal Record* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, and Michael Joseph), pp. 108-09.

⁸⁶ Young, ‘The Wilson government and the Davies peace mission to North Vietnam, July 1965’, p. 550; and Wilson, *The Labour Governments 1964-1970*, pp. 109-10.

⁸⁷ Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, Vol. 1, p. 253, entry for Thursday 17 June.

Crossman, 'I think we have got most of the value we can out of it already', which led Crossman to conclude that the main purpose of the proposal had been to prevent the Prime Ministers' Meeting from breaking up on the first day as a result of a row over Rhodesia. In that sense, Crossman wrote, 'I have no doubt the stunt was brilliantly successful.'⁸⁸ Similarly, one historian has commented that: 'Wilson was nothing if not manipulative and there were many critics who came to doubt the seriousness of such a peace attempt, which could be seen as a publicity exercise to divert attention from his problems within the Labour Party and the Commonwealth.'⁸⁹

Wilson survived the opening day of the Prime Ministers' Meeting by using his guile, but he obviously could not escape the Rhodesian problem altogether. When discussion of Rhodesia took place on 21 June, the African Commonwealth Prime Ministers subjected Bottomley and Wilson to a very rough ride indeed.⁹⁰ The barrage of criticism that Bottomley and Wilson had to endure was no doubt a most disagreeable experience, but their tolerance did much to preserve the goodwill of the African members of the Commonwealth in particular. One British High Commissioner observed that 'African leaders and their principal followers sometimes display political adolescence in their

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 255, entry for Sunday 27 June.

⁸⁹ Young, 'The Wilson government and the Davies peace mission to North Vietnam, July 1965', p. 549. For a more thorough discussion of the Commonwealth proposal see Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, pp. 71-82.

⁹⁰ See Wilson, *The Labour Governments 1964-1970*, pp. 114-19. cf. NAC: MG 31-E47, Vol. 66, Minutes of PMM (65) 8th Meeting, Item 5, 'Rhodesia', pp. 75-87; and NAA: A1838, 190/11/1, Part 2, Australian High Commission, London, to DEA, Canberra, Cable Nos. 5211 and 5212, 21 June 1965.

conduct, almost like wilful children.’⁹¹ He explained that African leaders ‘often deliberately indulge in exaggeration of their private thoughts when they make public speeches’ especially on racial matters, which helped to bolster their domestic authority.⁹² Their tendency to ‘indulge in excessively long-winded statements’ was a product of their cultural environment. ‘Their opinion springs from a traditional method of government in many African tribes. According to their custom, free, democratic and often very lengthy discussions hold a vital place in the settlement of public affairs.’⁹³ By allowing the African leaders an opportunity to express their views fully it ‘made them feel that the Commonwealth can be a valuable as well as congenial body’.⁹⁴ Wilson’s willingness to endure such lengthy discussion was an extension of his successful Cabinet management strategy.⁹⁵ It was no doubt helpful in preserving the unity of the Commonwealth in 1965 and beyond.

Lester Pearson helped to moderate the outcome of the 1965 Meeting, just as he had done the year before. Robert Menzies had once again increased tension by deriding African insistence on ‘one-man-one-vote’, and with his remark that he ‘found it puzzling to be

⁹¹ TNA: PRO, FCO/211, No. 1, ‘An impression of the Commonwealth conference’, Despatch from M. MacDonald, British High Commissioner, Nairobi, to Mr Bowden, CRO, 9 December 1966, para. 7, in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Volume 5, East of Suez and the Commonwealth. Part II: Europe, Rhodesia, Commonwealth* (London: The Stationery Office, 2004), p. 366. MacDonald’s comments on the attitudes and conduct of African members at the September 1966 Meeting may be applied equally to their conduct at the special conference convened in Lagos in January 1966, the 1965 Meeting, or even the 1964 Meeting.

⁹² Ibid, para. 9, in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, p. 367.

⁹³ Ibid., para. 10, in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, p. 368.

⁹⁴ Ibid., in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, p. 367.

⁹⁵ See above, Ch. 1, pp. 82-86.

reminded of Magna Carta and its principles and at the same time to hear the Prime Minister of Rhodesia referred to contemptuously and have his name coupled with allegations of corruption and bribery' when Smith was not there to defend himself.⁹⁶ With several speakers criticising British inaction and demanding that Wilson convene a constitutional conference, and some calling for Britain to use force against Rhodesia, Pearson sought to steer the meeting away from extreme views. He began by stressing that 'Everybody agreed on the principles that peace needed freedom, and that freedom implied self-government, which in turn implied majority rule as a basis of universal suffrage, and above all the absence of discrimination. The principles had all been agreed last year and this: the application was the difficulty.'⁹⁷ This was an astute opening statement because it emphasised the points of agreement and helped to diminish the focus on the contentious issues of implementation. Pearson praised the efforts of the British Government to put the agreed principles into practice and hailed Wilson's public statement on the consequences of a UDI as 'an outstanding example of political courage.'⁹⁸ Pearson rejected indefinite delays as unsafe, but also suggested that coercive economic and political measures or the use of military force would result in 'nothing but chaos'.⁹⁹ Although Pearson recognised that the British Government was solely responsible for deciding what to do, he said that it was the duty of other Commonwealth members to give their views on the decision. Pearson said that a constitutional conference should be convened soon (though he gave no specific time frame), African nationalists should be released from detention to participate, and there should be early progress in repealing

⁹⁶ NAC: MG 31-E47, Vol. 66, Minutes of PMM (65) 8th Meeting, Item 5, 'Rhodesia', pp. 78-79.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

repressive and discriminatory laws. Pearson referred to the 1964 communiqué – which had acknowledged that a constitutional conference should be convened with a view to establishing an independent Rhodesia ‘within the Commonwealth at the earliest practicable time on the basis of majority rule’ – and suggested that it would be necessary for the 1965 communiqué to go beyond this.¹⁰⁰ Wilson noted that although those words had been included in the 1964 communiqué they were not an agreed statement, and clarified that the British Government had reserved its position.¹⁰¹ In his memoirs Wilson wrote that ‘Lester Pearson certainly did not go all the way with the Africans, particularly on military intervention, but he felt that we should be doing more.’¹⁰² This is a somewhat opaque representation of Pearson’s position, since he was evidently sympathetic to the idea of a constitutional conference and therefore closely aligned with the views of the majority of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers. The Canadian Prime Minister’s activism was certainly no surprise to the British Government.¹⁰³ Nevertheless it did cause irritation: in the wake of the Meeting one senior official suggested that the British Government ought to develop ‘a particularly close connection with Australia and New Zealand and a slightly less close connection with Canada’.¹⁰⁴ Yet whatever the British may have thought of Canadian policy, it can certainly be argued that Pearson played a

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 82.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 82 and 84.

¹⁰² Wilson, *The Labour Governments 1964-1970*, p. 116.

¹⁰³ Arnold Smith had put the British on notice that Pearson intended to take an active role. TNA: PRO, DO 183/674, Sir Harry Lintott, British High Commissioner, Ottawa, to Sir Saville Garner, Commonwealth Relations Office, 17 May 1965.

¹⁰⁴ TNA: PRO, DO 193/81, Minute by P. Rogers, Deputy Secretary, Cabinet, 1 July 1965, para. 4, in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, pp. 342-43.

valuable role by helping to diffuse some of the tension at the Meeting engendered by the Rhodesian issue.

There were evident degrees of separation in the positions adopted by the African and Asian Prime Ministers, which is perhaps the most significant reason why the 1965 Meeting did not disintegrate over discussion of the Rhodesian problem. The most radical African leaders at the 1965 Meeting were Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia), Sir Alfred Margai (Sierra Leone), Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), Julius Nyerere (Tanzania), and Milton Obote (Uganda). Bruce Miller observed:

With variations, their position was that, having either experienced the use of force by British administrations in their own countries or seen it deployed in such other colonies as Aden, British Guiana, and Cyprus, they saw no reason why Britain should not use it against the Smith regime in Rhodesia.¹⁰⁵

Nkrumah initially took the lead on the Rhodesian issue. He was highly critical of several Labour Ministers who had bitterly denounced the 1961 Constitution yet now accepted it as the basis of progress towards independence in Rhodesia. He reproached the British Government for its failure to call a constitutional conference and called for it to do so without further delay. He rejected the argument that a constitutional conference was impractical because the Rhodesian Government was unwilling to attend and urged Britain

¹⁰⁵ Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, p. 205. Eric Williams (Trinidad) also adopted a similar position. NAC: MG 31-E47, Vol. 66, Minutes of PMM (65) 8th Meeting, Item 5, 'Rhodesia', pp. 82-83.

to use troops if necessary to impose direct rule.¹⁰⁶ Nkrumah's demands set the tone for the meeting. Kaunda emphasised that white minority regimes posed a threat to peace in southern Africa and warned that without a swift solution in Rhodesia it would become more like South Africa and the Portuguese colonies. He therefore supported the call for an immediate constitutional conference.¹⁰⁷ Wilson recalled in his memoirs that Nyerere, 'With his brilliant forensic powers ... put us in the dock on charge after charge.'¹⁰⁸ He dismissed Britain's attempts to negotiate with the Rhodesian Government and argued that there were no insurmountable obstacles to British military intervention, as Wilson put it: 'for him history and geography could not overcome an issue of principle.'¹⁰⁹ Margai and Obote both spoke in similar terms, criticising Bottomley for his apparent willingness to compromise with the Smith regime, and insisting that any settlement in Rhodesia must be based on 'one-man-one-vote'.¹¹⁰ Curiously, Nkrumah played a more moderate role after making his initial statement, refraining from supporting Nyerere and even 'telling Albert Margai to shut up', which astonished the British High Commissioner to Accra.¹¹¹ It has been argued that significant differences between Nkrumah and Nyerere on other political issues affected their behaviour at the 1964 and 1965 Meetings.¹¹² They had, for example,

¹⁰⁶ NAA: A1838, 190/11/1, Part 2, Australian High Commission, London, to DEA, Canberra, Cable No. 5212, 21 June 1965; and Aluko, 'The Role of Ghana in the Rhodesian Question', pp. 313-14.

¹⁰⁷ NAA: A1838, 190/11/1, Part 2, Australian High Commission, London, to DEA, Canberra, Cable No. 5212, 21 June 1965.

¹⁰⁸ Wilson, *The Labour Governments 1964-1970*, p. 116.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ NAC: MG 31-E47, Vol. 66, Minutes of PMM (65) 8th Meeting, Item 5, 'Rhodesia', pp. 75-78.

¹¹¹ Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy 1957-66*, pp. 390-91. The author cites 'Interview: CF-103, 10 November 1965, London.'

¹¹² Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, p. 200.

disagreed vehemently in 1963 about the proposed East African Federation.¹¹³ Such division must caution against any suggestion that the more extreme African leaders constituted a monolithic bloc, and this may have helped Wilson and Bottomley to weather the storm of criticism.

Wilson and Bottomley also received some degree of support from moderate African leaders, especially Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (Nigeria), who was more sympathetic to the difficulties that the British Government faced and critical of obduracy on both sides in Rhodesia. He said that African majority rule in Rhodesia could not be achieved overnight because Rhodesian Africans had no experience of administration. He therefore suggested that it was essential to build confidence and co-operation between blacks and whites in Rhodesia.¹¹⁴ The Asian representatives were not uncritical of some of Abubakar's comments. Lal Bahadur Shastri (India) rejected the argument that there were no Africans capable of governing Rhodesia; he said that such arguments had been used in relation to all colonial territories. Shastri did, however, agree with Abubakar's emphasis on confidence-building measures and accepted that the timing of a constitutional conference must rest with the British Government.¹¹⁵ Agha Hilaly (Pakistan) went further,

¹¹³ Whereas Nkrumah believed that movements for regional unification militated against broader Pan-African visions of continental solidarity, Nyerere dismissed 'the curious argument that the continued "balkanisation" of East Africa will somehow help African unity'. Quoted in Mazrui, *Towards a Pax Africana*, p. 71. For Nkrumah's Pan-African vision see *Africa Must Unite* (New York: International Publishers, New edn. 1970).

¹¹⁴ NAC: MG 31-E47, Vol. 66, Minutes of PMM (65) 8th Meeting, Item 5, 'Rhodesia', pp. 78-79; and NAA: A1838, 190/11/1, Part 2, Australian High Commission, London, to DEA, Canberra, Cable No. 5211, 21 June 1965.

¹¹⁵ NAC: MG 31-E47, Vol. 66, Minutes of PMM (65) 8th Meeting, Item 5, 'Rhodesia', p. 81.

condemning minority government as indefensible and expressing his support for an immediate constitutional conference.¹¹⁶ Yet the Asian delegates were by no means sympathetic to the extreme African leaders who called for the use of force against Rhodesia, and one British official subsequently commented on the ‘obvious distaste of the Asian members at some of the African interventions’.¹¹⁷ The same official also observed that Tunku Abdul Rahman (Malaysia) and Donald Sangster (Jamaica) were ‘fast asleep during the plea of Africans on the dangers to world peace in Africa’ and concluded that the 1965 Prime Ministers’ Meeting had shown that the Commonwealth in ‘its original concept as a cohesive body with common interests’ was dead.¹¹⁸

The drafting of the 1965 final communiqué took eleven hours, most of which was taken up by ‘long and unpleasant debates’ about the wording in the passage dealing with Rhodesia.¹¹⁹ The communiqué went a little further than the preceding year’s, stating that ‘in the process of seeking to reach agreement on Rhodesia’s advance to independence a constitutional conference would, at the appropriate time, be a natural step.’ If negotiations did not produce satisfactory results the British Government ‘would be ready to consider promoting such a conference in order to ensure Rhodesia’s progress to independence on a basis acceptable to the people of Rhodesia as a whole.’ The communiqué also stated that the Commonwealth Prime Ministers ‘welcome the statement of the British Government that the principle of “one-man-one-vote” was regarded as the

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

¹¹⁷ TNA: PRO, DO 193/81, Minute by P. Rogers, Deputy Secretary, Cabinet, 1 July 1965, para. 1, in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, p. 341.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ NAA: A1838, 190/11/1, Part 3, Australian High Commission, London, to DEA, Canberra, Cable No. 5448, 26 June 1965. See also Wilson, *The Labour Governments 1964-1970*, pp. 118-19.

very basis of democracy and this should be applied to Rhodesia.’¹²⁰ This was enough to satisfy all the delegates except Nyerere, who dissociated Tanzania from the communiqué. He explained: ‘I am not concerned about timetables. I know that this is a tough, difficult business and that it cannot be done in a hurry. But this does not matter so much as long as the objectives of achieving independence *on the basis of majority rule* were established in advance. But it was the adamant refusal of Mr Wilson to commit the British Government to these six words that caused all the trouble.’¹²¹ Nyerere was concerned that the wording of the communiqué allowed the British Government to negotiate with the Rhodesian regime on the basis that majority rule could be deferred until after independence was granted.¹²² Wilson said privately that if he went any further it would raise the possibility of ‘dangerous reactions’ in Rhodesia, and he threatened to revoke all the concessions that he had made on the wording of the communiqué if the African Prime Ministers insisted on trying to bind him to an explicit commitment to independence based African majority rule.¹²³ Menzies not unreasonably paid tribute to Wilson when he said that ‘Mr Wilson and his Government went as far as any government could go on this matter’.¹²⁴ This was certainly born out by the reaction of Ian Smith. On 1 July he made a statement in the Rhodesian Legislative Assembly in which he expressed strong criticism of the Prime Ministers’ Meeting. He warned that any attempt to convene a constitutional

¹²⁰ Cmnd. 2712, *Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting 1965: final communiqué* (London: HMSO, 1965). Quoted in Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, p. 201; and Wilson, *The Labour Governments 1964-1970*, p. 119.

¹²¹ *The Observer*, 27 June 1965. Quoted in Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, pp. 199-200.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 200.

¹²³ NAA: A1838, 190/11/1, Part 3, Australian High Commission, London, to DEA, Canberra, Cable No. 5448, 26 June 1965.

¹²⁴ *Current Notes* (June 1965), pp. 349-50. Quoted in Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, p. 201.

conference would be interpreted as interference in Rhodesia's internal affairs and declared, ominously, 'I hope no-one has any false illusions as to what that would mean.' Yet, for the moment, he remained committed to further negotiations.¹²⁵

Conclusion

The Rhodesian problem was central to the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meetings of 1964 and 1965. The circumstances leading up to the 1965 Meeting – consolidation of the Rhodesian Front's domestic political support, its increasingly open talk about the possibility of a UDI, its evident contempt for the African members of the Commonwealth, and seething Afro-Asian indignation at Britain's professed inability to end racial discrimination in Rhodesia – gave Wilson ample reason to believe that the Meeting could end in disaster. Yet, as Bruce Miller commented, 'Wilson had weathered the Prime Ministers' Meeting with nothing to tie his hands except the promise to consider a constitutional conference in loosely defined circumstances.'¹²⁶ The outcome of the Meeting can be explained by three main factors. First, Wilson managed the Meeting very effectively: initially, he deflected attention from the Rhodesian problem by proposing a Commonwealth peace mission to Vietnam; then he demonstrated considerable patience in the face of withering African criticism; finally, he set a clear limit on the extent to which he was prepared to compromise on the wording of the final communiqué. Second, Wilson was fortunate that Lester Pearson took a similar position to those adopted by some African and Asian representatives. Although the British found the Canadian Prime

¹²⁵ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 12, 'Southern Rhodesia', United Nations Brief, DEA, Wellington, 3 September 1965, pp. 2-3.

¹²⁶ Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, p. 201.

Minister's 'holier than thou' attitude somewhat irritating, it nevertheless helped to offset the damage that the Australian Prime Minister inflicted upon African confidence in the Commonwealth. The third, and probably most significant reason why Wilson secured a favourable outcome, is that there were divisions among radical and moderate Commonwealth leaders, which allowed him some scope for manoeuvre, especially on the timing of a constitutional conference for Rhodesia. Yet although the Meeting ended on terms favourable to the British Government, the unpleasant experience of being 'in the dock' did begin a process in Whitehall of questioning the concept and utility of the Commonwealth.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ See documents in Ashton and Louis (eds.), *BDEEP Series A, Vol. 5, Part II*, pp. 340 ff.

PART THREE

THE UNITED STATES AND THE RHODESIAN CRISIS, 1964-65

Chapter Six

Anglo-American Relations and the Rhodesian Crisis

Introduction

Part Two of the thesis has demonstrated that Wilson and his ministers looked to the Old Commonwealth for assistance in coping with the Rhodesian Crisis, and that to a certain extent the Old Commonwealth obliged. Part Three of the thesis shows that the British Government had similar – if not greater – expectations of the United States, but observes that the United States was not as forthcoming as the British Government hoped it would be. This chapter briefly notes the attitudes of the U.S. Government towards the Central African Federation, explaining why the United States was interested in the politics of the region. The chapter then explores in detail the nature of Anglo-American consultation between 1964 and 1965, during which time Britain and the United States were involved in joint consideration of two sensitive and complicated issues. First, what help the United States could give to support the Zambian economy in the event of economic warfare with Rhodesia following a UDI. Second, what measures the United States could take to give effect to British efforts to deter Rhodesia from declaring its independence unilaterally. The chapter argues that on both issues Anglo-American relations were subject to considerable strain, and explains the misunderstandings and frustrations in Anglo-American relations by reference to alliance theory.

The United States, Britain, and the Central African Federation

Thomas J. Noer has commented: ‘Rhodesia was Lyndon Johnson’s “crisis”, even though it had been a “problem” for American diplomats for nearly five years.’¹ During those five years American policy makers considered the Rhodesian problem to be of secondary importance compared to the difficulties presented by the Congo, Angola and South Africa. Nevertheless, Washington could not ignore the situation in the Central African Federation and two broad policy options were available to the U.S. Government. It could disclaim any involvement on the basis that it was an internal matter for the British Government. However, the United States rejected this policy because it would have done nothing to counter the possibility of violent action by African nationalists or an attempt to impose majority rule through the United Nations. The alternative was to support British efforts to retain control of the situation, which committed the United States to oppose any efforts by the white minority to seize independence unilaterally.² Larry Butler has observed that from 1959 until the demise of the Federation, the United States gave consistent support to British policy. Although the Americans offered encouragement and advice during this period, there is little evidence of direct American influence on British policy formulation.³ There are several reasons for this. First, British and American

¹ Thomas J. Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation. The United States and White Africa, 1948-1968* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985), p. 185.

² *Ibid.*, p. 188.

³ This substantiates the views expressed in R. Owendale, ‘Macmillan and the Wind of Change in Africa, 1957–60’, *Historical Journal*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (June 1995), pp. 455-77; and Wm. R. Louis and R. Robinson, ‘The Imperialism of Decolonization’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. XXII, No. 3 (1994), pp. 462-511. Cited in L. J. Butler, ‘Britain, the United States, and the Demise of the Central

objectives in Central Africa were much the same, with both seeking a swift end to empire and the establishment of independent states friendly to the West. Second, decolonisation had strong domestic political implications in Britain and the United States. Third, Cold War considerations were of only marginal relevance; there was no significant Communist activity in any of the Federation territories and African nationalists actively sought American support, which meant that the U.S. Government could afford to be relatively relaxed about British policy. Fourth, 'there was no perceived threat to British or American business interests, which may account for the surprising absence of the economic dimension in Anglo-American discussions during this period.' Fifth, and in Butler's view most significant, Britain and the United States shared an abhorrence of the prospect of racial conflict in Central Africa and tended to view settler attitudes as being a greater problem than African nationalism. These factors, taken together, help to explain the 'helpful but silent' approach adopted by Washington during the last years of the Federation.⁴

Anglo-American consultation, 1964-65

During 1964 and 1965 the basic pattern of U.S. policy on the issue of Rhodesia's independence remained the same as it had been during the final years of the Federation. The Johnson administration continued to encourage the British and Rhodesian

African Federation, 1959–63', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 3 (September 2000), pp. 131 and 147.

⁴ Butler, 'Britain, the United States, and the Demise of the Central African Federation, 1959–63', p. 147. For the growing significance of racial considerations on U.S. policy towards the Federation see also Andrew DeRoche, 'Establishing the Centrality of Race: Relations Between the U.S. and the Rhodesian Federation, 1953–1963', *Zambezia*, Vol. XXV, No. 2 (1998), pp. 209-30.

Governments in their search for a constitutional settlement, but some of the underlying factors that had shaped U.S. policy in the earlier period began to shift. For example, as the discrimination against Africans in Rhodesia showed no sign of abatement and Britain continued to profess its inability to intervene, opportunities for Communist infiltration increased, which tended to alarm some sections of the U.S. bureaucracy. Also, whereas in the final years of the Federation there had been no threat to British and American economic interests, the prospect of a UDI by Rhodesia suggested the possibility of economic warfare against Zambia, which Britain and the United States could not ignore because they were heavily involved in and dependent upon Zambian copper production. These shifting circumstances prompted the United States to become more vocal in the period following the dissolution of the Central African Federation. As the likelihood of a UDI increased, Anglo-American relations became subject to greater strain, as Noer has commented: 'The problems of UDI forced America and Great Britain into even closer policy coordination than usual, but the crisis also showed the tension, jealousy and rivalry within the "special relationship." America was unaccustomed to following any nation. It was often frustrated and impatient in its role as supporting actor to Great Britain's lead.'⁵ Yet this was not the only cause of friction in Anglo-American discussions. Despite the fact that some U.S. officials urged the British Government to take a firmer approach to the Rhodesian problem, British ministers formed the impression that the highest echelons of the Johnson administration wanted to wash their hands of the Rhodesian problem. It is now necessary to document the development of this 'tension, jealousy and rivalry' before proceeding to analyse the causes of it.

⁵ Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, p. 186.

American frustration and impatience became apparent in early 1964 shortly after the dissolution of the Central African Federation. The British Government denied a request from the Rhodesian Government for independence on the basis of the 1961 Constitution, which, as noted above, resulted in the downfall of Winston Field and his replacement by Ian Smith. The State Department viewed these developments with mounting concern. Undersecretary of State George Ball noted that Smith's ousting of Field had increased the danger of UDI because it wiped out moderation in the Rhodesian cabinet and decreased the slim possibility of successful negotiations with Britain or agreement with the African nationalists. Ball observed that the U.S. had virtually no leverage for directly influencing developments and should remain in the background, leaving the British Government as the responsible party to deal with the situation.⁶ Ball played a key role in the development of U.S. policy towards Rhodesia and his posture contributed to significant tension between the American and British governments during the course of the next eighteen months.

The State Department moved swiftly to obtain British assessment of the situation. At a meeting of officials the Permanent Under Secretary at the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO), Sir Saville Garner, told the U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary for African

⁶ Ball to U.S. embassies in Africa, Circular Cable No. 1924, 15 April 1964, *Declassified Documents Reference System – Index and Abstracts* (Woodbridge, CT: Gale/Primary Source Media, 1998). Ball invited local assessments of the developments in Rhodesia and these were not optimistic. In June 1964, Ambassador Satterthwaite in Pretoria concurred with Ball's assessment that UDI was an increasingly likely possibility, and warned that South Africa would be almost certain to give strong economic support to Salisbury. In September 1964, Consul General McClelland in Salisbury predicted that UDI would occur within a year unless the British Government abandoned its conditions for independence. Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, pp. 190-91.

Affairs, Wayne Fredericks, that Field was extremely bitter towards Smith and there was a strong possibility that he could move into opposition, taking with him sufficient Rhodesian Front support to bring down the Government. The British Government anticipated that the former Prime Minister of the Central African Federation, Sir Roy Welensky, might once again become influential. Although the British were not enthusiastic about this (relations with Welensky had been somewhat prickly) it was thought that Welensky would at least be willing to discuss reasonably the possible formulas for a constitutional settlement.⁷ A few days later, at a higher-level meeting, Foreign Secretary R. A. Butler told Secretary of State Dean Rusk that Ian Smith ‘seemed to be moving away from a unilateral declaration of independence.’⁸ British officials and ministers were therefore sanguine about the situation, despite the recent developments in Rhodesian politics that had given greater cause for concern in the State Department. As detailed below, these discussions saw the early development of a pattern in Anglo-American consultation on the Rhodesian problem. The British failed consistently to reassure the Americans that a UDI could be prevented, or that adequate contingency plans existed to deal effectively with a UDI. Senior members of the U.S. Government therefore became increasingly concerned that the British were trying to entrap them in the management of the Rhodesian problem to a degree that was well beyond an acceptable level of U.S. commitment.

⁷ Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga, Head Office, Wellington [hereafter ANZ]: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/4/1, J. H. Weir, Counsellor, New Zealand Embassy, Washington, to Secretary of External Affairs, Wellington, 23 April 1964.

⁸ Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, Texas [hereafter, LBJL]: National Security File [hereafter, NSF], UK Country File, Box 212, ‘UK Vol. XV 12/63–9/65’, Memorandum of Conversation, 27 April 1964.

American officials were right to be concerned, since a corollary of the Micawber-like attitude of the British Government was that little, if any, thought had been given to contingency planning to deal with a UDI. U.S. officials became starkly aware of this during the meetings with their British counterparts in April 1964. The exchange between Sir Saville Garner and Wayne Fredericks is worth recounting because it demonstrates the casual British attitude towards the Rhodesian problem. Whilst discussing the African nationalist movements,⁹ Garner reported *inter alia* that Joshua Nkomo had been seeking money to finance the training of guerillas in Zanzibar and that one of his deputies, George Silundika, was presently in Peking soliciting funds. When Fredericks asked what the British Government would do in the event of widespread violence in Rhodesia, Garner replied that the Rhodesian Government was likely to be able to contain violence on any foreseeable scale. Fredericks asked if the British Government would intervene if there were a Sharpsville-type scenario. Garner told him that a decision would be taken in the light of the circumstances that prevailed at the time, but he was inclined to doubt whether a mass African movement – which had been a precondition of Sharpsville – was likely to develop in Rhodesia. Fredericks then questioned what would happen if freedom fighters were infiltrated into Rhodesia, but Garner also thought that this was unlikely. Although Tanzania had provided facilities to train guerillas from Mozambique, Garner thought that it would not allow freedom fighters to be infiltrated into another Commonwealth country. Fredericks also asked how the British Government would react if the African nationalists established a government-in-exile. Garner agreed that this was a possibility and indicated that it would be considered if and when it occurred. When asked what would happen if Commonwealth governments recognised a government-in-exile, Garner commented that

⁹ For brief details see above, Ch. 1, p. 36, n. 33.

many doubtless would but it would make no difference to the British Government.¹⁰ Garner therefore gave a clear signal that the British Government had not addressed several contingencies relating to the Rhodesian problem. In its report of the discussions the New Zealand Embassy commented:

Though Garner's casual remarks were probably not intended to be taken literally, the State Department certainly seems to have taken them at their face value. Perhaps as much as anything else the State Department's tendency to be unimpressed by British efforts in Southern Rhodesia reflects United States frustration at seldom being consulted on this question except where their support is required in the United Nations.¹¹

Equally, however, the British occasionally found that the United States frustrated ideas that they *did* have for advancing towards a solution in Rhodesia. For example, the British Government was hopeful that an extensive education program would enfranchise Africans under the 1961 Constitution, eventually bringing about majority rule. Garner was therefore dismayed to learn that the United States was tapering off its aid to Rhodesia and would be unable to make any significant contribution to the education project.¹² The records of these early exchanges between British and American officials show clearly that Anglo-American consultation and cooperation on the Rhodesian problem was very poor.

¹⁰ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/4/1, Weir to Secretary of External Affairs, Wellington, 23 April 1964.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid. This reflected the sharp drop in funds allocated to the U.S. Agency for International Development. In 1962 these stood at \$312, but declined to \$261 million in 1963 and \$202 million in 1964. Figures cited in DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome*, p. 97.

The radicalisation of Rhodesian politics, and the apparent nonchalance of the British Government, prompted the State Department to maintain a careful watch on developments throughout 1964. For several months U.S. officials were convinced that the best hope for a solution to the problem lay with Welensky, who was known to have discussed the possibility of an electoral coalition with Whitehead, and a prospective timetable for African majority rule with the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole. Even so, the State Department felt that the immediate outlook in Rhodesia was bleak, as several members of the Rhodesian Front were pressing for an early UDI and the Government was intensifying its repression against African nationalists and European critics alike.¹³ The Rhodesian Government's announcement that it would hold an *indaba* of African chiefs and a referendum among white voters to determine the acceptability of independence under the 1961 Constitution heightened tensions even further. In discussions with African nationalists the U.S. chargé d'affaires in Lusaka, Robert Foulon, was told that the Africans wanted a non-violent settlement but if a UDI occurred they would have no alternative but to escalate their program of sabotage and violence. Foulon was warned that African bitterness ran so deep that in any confrontation the safety of even the most progressive European Rhodesians could not be guaranteed.¹⁴ This was obviously at variance with the assessments that British officials had provided to the U.S. Government earlier in the year. The State Department therefore directed enquiries to British officials in Lusaka, Salisbury, Washington and London in an anxious attempt to ascertain what the British Government would do in the event of a UDI. British Embassy staff in

¹³ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 9, Weir to Secretary of External Affairs, Wellington, 20 May 1964.

¹⁴ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 9, Weir to Secretary of External Affairs, Wellington, 30 September 1964. Weir reported that Foulon had met with James Chikerema, acting leader of ZAPU.

Washington confessed that they were 'quite relieved at not being informed of whatever contingency plans may exist, since they would probably be such that we could not pass them on to the Americans anyhow, and we can also plead ignorance in reply to the questions of our Southern Rhodesian colleagues.'¹⁵ American officials could glean no significant information outside Washington either, as the New Zealand Embassy reported:

Though they had found odd evidence of contingency planning, American representatives in London had been able to discover little that would suggest the matter was being considered seriously; certainly, but not unexpectedly, Ministers were not at this time interested in the subject.¹⁶

British ministers gave little attention to the Rhodesian problem at this time because of an impending general election. American officials realised that they could expect to make little headway on the Rhodesian issue during the election campaign, but stepped up their efforts to determine the British position once the new Labour Government had been elected.¹⁷ The Labour Government put a high premium on its relations with Washington

¹⁵ The National Archives [hereafter TNA]: Public Records Office, Kew [hereafter PRO], DO 183/314, John Killick, British Embassy, Washington, to Guy Millard, West and Central Africa Department [hereafter WCAD], Foreign Office, 28 August 1964.

¹⁶ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 9, Weir to Secretary of External Affairs, Wellington, 30 September 1964.

¹⁷ The U.S. Consul General in Salisbury, Roswell McClelland, reported that he had spoken with the British High Commissioner, J. B. Johnston, about the Rhodesian policy of the new Government. McClelland informed Washington that Johnston had no precise instructions from London regarding the position that the new Government would take in the event of a UDI. Johnston did not know, for example, whether he would be instructed to remain in Salisbury. Clearly concerned by the vagueness of the British position, McClelland urged the U.S. Government to give urgent consideration to the nature of the American response

and acted quickly to seize the initiative on tricky issues, especially the Multilateral Force, which ‘became the barometer for Anglo-American relations.’¹⁸ Wilson was also keen to ascertain American thoughts on the Rhodesian problem and African policy more generally, and instructed his Foreign Secretary, Patrick Gordon Walker, to explore these issues during his visit to Washington in October 1964. The British Government feared that the recent *indaba* of African chiefs and impending referendum of Europeans in Rhodesia could be a preliminary move towards a UDI. The British Government had therefore prepared a warning statement that it intended to issue if the Rhodesian Government failed to give a categorical assurance that it was not contemplating such a measure.¹⁹ Walker discussed the warning statement with Rusk, who assured the Foreign Secretary that the U.S. Government supported Britain’s policy and would follow its lead.²⁰ There was also some discussion of the action that the British Government would be likely to take against Rhodesia in the event of a UDI. Ball enquired whether economic sanctions could create a problem in terms of setting a precedent that the British

to a UDI if it occurred concomitant with Zambian independence on 24 October. LBJL: NSF, Rhodesia Country File, Box 97, ‘Cables, 12/63–1/66’, McClelland to State Department, 23 October 1964.

¹⁸ Saki Dockrill, ‘Forging the Anglo-American Global Defence Partnership: Harold Wilson, Lyndon Johnson and the Washington Summit, December 1964’, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (December 2000), p. 114.

¹⁹ For details of the statement, see above, Ch. 1, pp. 37-39.

²⁰ LBJL: NSF, UK Country File, Box 212, ‘Walker Visit Briefing Book’, Memorandum of Conversation, 26 October 1964; and *Foreign Relations of the United States 1964-68*, Vol. XXIV, *Africa* [hereafter *FRUS*], (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office for the Department of State, 1999), pp. 788-89. On 28 October the U.S. Government released a statement declaring: ‘We have been encouraged by the forthright position taken by the British Government in insisting that it would not sanction independence for Rhodesia until satisfied that the people have been allowed the full exercise of self-determination.’ Quoted in G. Mennen Williams, *Africa for the Africans* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1969), p. 112.

Government would then have to follow against South Africa.²¹ This was a significant indication of one of the major concerns of the U.S. Government about the Rhodesian issue: that it should not be treated in isolation lest it prejudice American regional policy as a whole.²² No doubt with this mind the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Averell Harriman, had further talks with Walker ‘primarily to cover the African situation ... to indicate that we were prepared to work closely with the British on all matters of mutual interest from South Africa, Portuguese territory and the Congo, etc.’²³ These talks demonstrate the continuing importance that London and Washington attached to Anglo-American consultation and cooperation, which contradicts the view that there was nothing left of the special relationship by the time that Wilson came into office.²⁴

Walker’s visit enabled the State Department to develop some preliminary ideas about how to respond to a UDI. The U.S. Government would not recognise an illegal Rhodesian regime but it would continue to maintain its Consulate in Salisbury. Although the U.S. Government would not recognise a government-in-exile, it was anxious that only one such government should be formed – by ZAPU – and was prepared to put pressure on

²¹ Memorandum of Conversation, 26 October 1964, *FRUS*, pp. 788-89.

²² For a discussion of how U.S. economic and strategic interests conditioned attitudes within the bureaucracy see Anthony Lake, *The ‘Tar Baby’ Option: American Policy Toward Southern Rhodesia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), Ch. 3; and Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, Ch. 8. Andrew DeRoche takes issue with some of Lake’s interpretations of attitudes within the State Department, *Black, White, and Chrome*, Chs. 3 and 4. The concept of bureaucratic politics is applied explicitly in the final chapter of this thesis.

²³ LBJL: NSF, UK Country File, Box 212, ‘Walker Visit Briefing Book’, Memorandum, Harriman to Bundy, 27 October 1964.

²⁴ See above, Introduction, p. 20, n. 52.

Hastings Banda if it became clear that he was willing to allow ZANU to set up a rival government in Malawi. As far as economic sanctions were concerned, the State Department acknowledged that as American investment in Rhodesia was so insignificant there was little that the U.S. Government could do, and in any event it would take no action except in concert with the British Government.²⁵ American contingency planning at this stage was somewhat patchy and Washington was therefore slow to communicate its ideas to its diplomatic posts overseas.²⁶ Yet this is hardly surprising given that the U.S. Government intended to follow the British lead in the event of a UDI and the British Government had thus far demonstrated very little idea of what it intended to do should it occur. Anglo-American relations became subject to greater strain as the two governments moved to discuss the implications of the Rhodesian problem in more detail, especially contingency plans relating to the protection of the Zambian economy.

The Zambian contingency

From late 1964 the U.S. Government began to give detailed consideration to the potential impact that a UDI could have upon Zambia. There can be no doubt that Zambian copper production was a key issue for the Johnson administration, which acknowledged explicitly that it was a matter of particular economic and strategic importance for the United States:

²⁵ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 10, Totara, Washington, to Secretary of External Affairs, Wellington, 2 November 1964. In 1964 Rhodesian exports to the U.S. were worth \$10 million, and imports from the U.S. totalled \$20 million. Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, p. 202.

²⁶ According to British officials, the U.S. Consulate in Salisbury was unaware of State Department thinking. TNA: PRO, DO 184/614, Neville French, British High Commission, Salisbury, to Mrs M. B. Chitty, Commonwealth Relations Office [hereafter CRO], 20 November 1964.

Zambia is one of the few black African countries where there is a significant U.S. economic interest. Zambia produces about 15% of free world copper (\$360 million last year compared to \$700 million U.S. domestic production). Over \$100 million of Zambian production is U.S. owned ... Zambia and Congo copper together (they are all one field) produce over 20% of free world copper; Zambia has the world's largest known reserves. With copper production reasonably tight, and Communist supplies very limited, the Zambia-Congo copper would be a rich prize for the Chinese (who already buy some of it).²⁷

There were concerns in Lusaka, London, and Washington that if Zambia applied sanctions against Rhodesia in the event of a UDI, the Rhodesian Government would retaliate by cutting off coal and electricity supplies to the Zambian copper mines, and depriving Zambia of railroad facilities for the shipment of copper. This would ruin the Zambian copper industry and drive up the price of copper on the world market. Accordingly, this problem was discussed at both the official and political levels in London and Washington from late 1964 throughout 1965. State Department officials initially came up with the idea of inserting a small number of troops on the Zambian border (though it was not specified if these were to be British or American) to protect the Kariba Dam and Wankie colliery.²⁸ This proposal quickly faded from view, no doubt to

²⁷ LBJL: NSF, Zambia Country File, Box 102, 'Memos and Misc. 8/64-9/68', 'A note on copper, Zambia and the U.S.', undated but prepared by Bill Brubeck as an addendum to the 'talking points' paper of 1 December 1964 written for the visit of Kenneth Kaunda. For the uses of copper in U.S. industries see DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome*, p. 117.

²⁸ TNA: PRO, DO 183/619, N. C. C. Trench, British Embassy, Washington, to Martin Le Quesne, WCAD, Foreign Office, 5 February 1965. Trench reported a conversation with Edward Mulcahy, Deputy Director

the relief of the British Government, which had taken a decision not to use force in Rhodesia. If troops had been deployed as suggested by the State Department it could have produced even greater pressure from African nationalists and African members of the Commonwealth to send troops into Rhodesia itself in order to impose a new constitution and facilitate the transition to African majority rule.²⁹ The first serious focus of Anglo-American discussions was the proposal to construct a railroad that would bypass Rhodesia and re-route *Zambian* trade through Tanzania.³⁰ However, following talks between officials in March 1965 some problems in policy co-ordination emerged as a result of a breakdown in channels of communication. The British Embassy in Washington complained that the Commonwealth Relations Office had failed to keep it informed about developments, particularly concerning *Zambian* contingency planning, which militated against effective co-ordination with the U.S. Government.³¹ Meanwhile, in Whitehall there was also growing concern that the existing arrangements for consultation in London were inadequate. One Foreign Office official observed:

for Eastern and Central African Affairs, who suggested that Wayne Fredericks had requested the State Department and Department of Defense to draw up suitable military plans.

²⁹ For a discussion of the problems associated with the use of force see above, Ch. 2.

³⁰ LBJL: NSF, UK Country File, Box 207, 'Memos Vol. III 2/65-4/65', Memorandum of Conversation, 23 March 1965, Part V, 'Southern Rhodesia and Zambia'; and TNA: PRO, DO 183/691, 'Record of Anglo-American talks held on Tuesday 23 March'. The efficacy of the proposal generated considerable bureaucratic conflict in the Johnson administration. See below, Ch. 7, pp. 365 ff.

³¹ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181877 and DO 183/691, A. H. Walker, British Embassy, Washington, to Mrs. M. B. Chitty, CRO, 28 April 1965. Walker pointed out that: 'unless we have full background we are always in some danger of crossing wires or putting a foot wrong.'

The Cabinet Office are somewhat concerned about the state of our consultation with the Americans ... Following the Anglo-American talks last month there has been consultation between the CRO and Mr. Coote, but it is clear already that this is nothing like enough, and that these complicated questions cannot be handled through this channel.³²

The Foreign Office therefore encouraged the Government to expedite the arrangements for joint contingency planning: 'We hope that Ministers will agree that we should discuss these problems at a high level with the Americans. In our view it is important that we should do so soon – the CRO are taking rather too leisurely an attitude to this and it can only be done effectively in Washington.'³³ Ministers agreed that the Foreign Office should arrange for further talks to take place between officials and then at a more senior level.³⁴ Talks duly took place in Washington during May, which proved helpful in clarifying the degree of assistance that could be offered to Zambia in the event that the copper industry was compromised following a UDI. British and American officials concluded that by using surface transportation only it would be possible to enable Zambia to continue exporting 200,000 tons of copper per year and, if an airlift were to be implemented, around 350,000 tons (Zambia's usual annual production was 700,000 tons). Nevertheless, it was recognised that the fall in production would have serious

³² TNA: PRO, FO 371/181877, Minute by John Wilson, WCAD, Foreign Office, 29 April 1965.

³³ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181877, Martin Le Quesne, WCAD, Foreign Office, to George Thomson, Minister of State, 4 May 1965. Le Quesne's comments reiterated the recommendation of the Defence and Oversea Policy (Official) Committee. See TNA: PRO, CAB 148/21, OPD (65) 81, 'Preparation for action in the event of a UDI: Note by the Chairman of the DOPC (Official) Committee', 30 April 1965, para. 16.

³⁴ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, Minutes of OPD (65) 24th Meeting, 5 May 1965; and TNA: PRO, FO 371/181893.

repercussions for Britain, since its industry would be affected and sterling would be under pressure. It was also acknowledged that a decline in Zambian output would impact upon the world market and to prevent prices from rising other measures would have to be considered, including the release of copper from the U.S. strategic stockpile.³⁵ At this point, therefore, British and American officials were tackling the salient issues with some effect, though matters became more difficult as UDI loomed larger.

In September a higher level British delegation visited Washington for talks with Rusk. The Secretary of State was told that the British Government believed only an airlift would be sufficient to keep the Zambian economy afloat, and he was given notice that an approach would shortly be made to set up an Anglo-American group of experts to visit Tanzania and Zambia to assess the requirements for an airlift.³⁶ Rusk was concerned to ensure that British and American approaches to the Zambian problem were properly coordinated and he wanted to know if the British Government felt that the U.S. Government was 'in line' with regard to the Rhodesian problem. The British delegation was confident that this was the case but suggested that they would have to give increasing thought to keeping 'in line' if a UDI did occur, particularly in handling the issue at the United Nations.³⁷ Yet shortly after this meeting Britain and the United States began to fall seriously out of line with one another in relation to the Zambian contingency. Using British, American and New Zealand sources it is possible to examine in detail how

³⁵ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 12, M. J. C. Templeton, Counsellor, New Zealand High Commission, London, to Secretary of External Affairs, Wellington, 2 June 1965.

³⁶ LBJL: NSF, UK Country File, Box 209, 'Memos Vol. VII 10/65-1/66', Memorandum of Conversation, 20 September 1965, 'Current Scene in Eastern and Southern Africa: Talks with CRO Officials'; and *FRUS*, p. 804.

³⁷ *FRUS*, p. 805.

regular channels of communication between London and Washington became confused, leading to misunderstandings and suspicion on both sides.

At the end of September George Ball instructed the U.S. Embassy in London to make it clear to the British Government that American support for the British position on UDI was ‘not without qualification.’ The U.S. Government could not undertake, for instance, to make up any balance of payments losses that Britain suffered as a result of sanctions imposed in the event of a UDI. Ball warned that that the question of U.S. sanctions against Rhodesia required further study and was contingent upon a clear statement from the British Government of what it intended to do. Ball instructed the U.S. Embassy to avoid making it possible for the British Government:

to seize upon our yet-to-be-determined ability or inability to follow the UK fully or partially on sanctions or our unwillingness to offset balance of payments losses as excusing them from taking action or permitting them to place blame for lack of action at our door particularly in justifying themselves to other Commonwealth countries.³⁸

The American Embassy executed its instructions, making it clear that whilst the U.S. Government supported the British position there was a question regarding how far the United States could go in terms of economic sanctions.³⁹ This might have been accepted at face value but for a telegram from Sir Patrick Dean, the British Ambassador in

³⁸ Ball to Kaiser, Cable No. 1669, 29 September 1965, *FRUS*, pp. 809-10.

³⁹ LBJL: NSF, UK Country File, Box 209, ‘Cables Vol. VII 10/65–1/66’, Kaiser to State Department, Cable No. 1418, 1 October 1965.

Washington, who reported that an informant in the New Zealand Embassy had advised him: 'there is a growing suspicion of United Kingdom motives at a very high level in the State Department.' Dean reported that according to his source, the State Department had formed an impression from Wendell Coote in the U.S. Embassy in London that the U.S. Government would be expected to shoulder £50 million of the cost of economic sanctions against Rhodesia, and £200 million as a result of the cessation of copper supplies from Zambia. According to Dean's informant, the State Department also believed that 'a refusal by the United States to lighten this load for the United Kingdom would be used publicly by Her Majesty's Government as grounds for taking no action against the Rhodesians.' Dean observed that according to his source, the U.S. Government had no intention of offering the United Kingdom any financial assistance in the event of a UDI and resented this attempt to blackmail them. Dean suggested that if there were suspicions in the State Department as a result of Coote's 'tendentious reporting,' the CRO should consider taking 'appropriate corrective action'.⁴⁰

Not surprisingly, the Foreign Office viewed this report with such alarm that it went straight before the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee (DOPC). From the minutes of the DOPC meeting it appears that Ministers took the view that American assistance *ought* to be forthcoming: 'It should be made clear to them that we regarded their help in the present situation as an essential part of our co-operation in world affairs, in which we maintained certain world responsibilities not directly related to our immediate economic interests.'⁴¹ This indicates the level of expectation that the Labour Government attached to the special relationship, but rather than press this point British officials wisely sought

⁴⁰ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181893, Dean to Foreign Office, Cable No. 2496, 2 October 1965.

⁴¹ TNA: PRO, CAB 148/18, Minutes of OPD (65) 42nd Meeting, 2 October 1965.

to disabuse the State Department and U.S. Embassy in London of any suspicion that the British Government was scheming to entrap the U.S. Government into extensive financial commitments.⁴²

The U.S. chargé d'affaires in London, Philip Kaiser, was at loss to understand Dean's report except, perhaps, as a 'badly garbled leak' of Ball's instructions. Kaiser found it difficult to see how there could be any British misunderstanding of the American position in view of his recent meeting with Sir Saville Garner.⁴³ However, Kaiser's vision obviously did not extend to diplomatic circles in Washington, and he was therefore unaware of the information that Dean had received from the New Zealand Embassy, which had more than a fair idea of the reasons for the misunderstanding between Britain and the United States:

We have the impression that American mistrust of British motives and intentions results from some breakdown in communications between the two countries. This extends to and seems in some degree to derive from

⁴² TNA: PRO, FO 371/181893, Le Quesne to Dean, Cable No. 7662, 2 October 1965; and minute of conversation between Le Quesne and Brubeck, U.S. Embassy, 2 October 1965. From Washington Dean reported that Wayne Fredericks had expressed surprise about the whole affair and undertook to speak with Rusk and any other senior officials who had been misinformed. Dean advised that regardless of what Coote or junior officials may have said the senior figures in the State Department were 'perfectly sound'. TNA: PRO, FO 371/181893, Dean to Foreign Office, Cable No. 2507, 3 October 1965.

⁴³ LBJL: NSF, UK Country File, Box 209, 'Cables Vol. VII 10/65-1/66', Kaiser to State Department, Cable No. 1450, 2 October 1965.

differences (which may well be more apparent than real) in thinking on [the] Zambia rescue operation.⁴⁴

According to the New Zealand Embassy, the U.S. Government believed that Rhodesia would have to be greatly provoked before it cut off electricity and coal supplies to Zambia. The Americans therefore felt that it was important that Britain should put greater pressure on Zambia not to cut its ties with Rhodesia. The Americans argued that emphasis in planning for a response to any interruption of Zambian copper production should not be on a short-term expensive airlift but on developing surface routes through Congo and Angola. Accordingly, the Americans informed the British that their commitments in Vietnam and elsewhere meant that there were no military aircraft or pilots available for an airlift, and canvassing of American commercial airlines had suggested that as a result of an increase in airfreight operations it would be unlikely that suitable aircraft could be chartered. Even if aircraft were available, the Americans doubted whether East African airfields could handle the volume of freight necessary for a successful rescue operation.⁴⁵ The U.S. Government was also doubtful that it would be in a position to assist by releasing copper from its own stockpile because withdrawals for new coinage meant that its stockpile had been depleted to the legal minimum and it was therefore unlikely that Congress would approve an emergency release. According to the New Zealand Embassy, the Americans had ‘not spoken in anything like this detail’ to the British Embassy in Washington, whose position was further undermined as a result of

⁴⁴ ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 13, Totara, Washington, to Secretary of External Affairs, Wellington, Saving 9, 1 October 1965.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

lack of information from the CRO and unreliable reporting of British views from the U.S. Embassy in London.⁴⁶

The British Government attempted to establish some clarity about the Zambian situation at a high level meeting in Washington in October 1965.⁴⁷ The Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, observed that the economic measures the British Government intended to take in the event of a UDI could have serious repercussions on the economies of Zambia and Britain. This would undo some of the efforts that had been made to support sterling, and he hoped that the U.S. Government would be able to offer further help in these circumstances. George Ball said that he assumed most damage to the British balance of payments would occur as a result of economic warfare between Rhodesia and Zambia, as the curtailment of copper supplies to Britain could involve the loss of £200 million in the first year. However, he could give no assurance concerning the ability of the United States to give additional support for sterling in these circumstances, and Dean Rusk confirmed that he did not have the authority to give any commitment in this regard. Ball also suggested that the U.S. Government could take only limited practical economic measures without Congressional authorisation. The U.S. Government could apply export controls against Rhodesia but was doubtful that this would be very effective because there were alternative sources of supply for the commodities that were involved. Imports, however, could not be restricted because the Trading with the Enemy Act was inoperable in the absence of war or the declaration of a state of emergency. Ball said that the only

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ What follows is based on TNA: PRO, FO 371/181893, 'Record of discussion between the Secretary of State and Mr. Rusk at the State Department on the morning of Monday 11 October 1965'; and Memorandum of Conversation, *FRUS*, pp. 822-24.

possibility the administration could see would be action pursuant to a resolution by the United Nations Security Council under Article 41 of the Charter. As far as the Zambian contingency plans were concerned, Secretary of State Rusk and Secretary of Defense McNamara expressed a preference for maximising use of railway routes rather than airlift supplies in and copper out of Zambia, but if an airlift became necessary, civil rather than military aircraft should be used.⁴⁸ Stewart's report of the outcome of the Washington talks was therefore pessimistic.⁴⁹ It also did not go unnoticed in London that some of the information the British delegation had provided to the Americans regarding British contingency plans was incorrect.⁵⁰ It is significant that even when discussions were conducted at a high level, the Americans left the talks without accurate information about British contingency plans and the British failed to obtain any assurance that the United States intended to assist in the implementation of those plans. The British Government's

⁴⁸ In December 1965 the British Government imposed an oil embargo on Rhodesia and the Rhodesian Government terminated supplies to Zambia. Britain and the United States arranged an airlift that enabled the Zambian copper industry to continue functioning. The U.S. Government contracted the Lockheed Corporation to fly copper out of the country, whilst TransWorld Airlines and Pan-American Airlines were contracted to deliver oil and petroleum products. Between January and April 1966 they delivered 68,921 barrels containing 3.6 million gallons of oil. In 1968 a pipeline was completed between Dar Es Salaam and the copperbelt, which ended the Zambian dilemma. Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 204-05; and DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome*, pp. 127-28.

⁴⁹ TNA: PRO, DO 183/619, Dean to Foreign Office, Cable No. 2585, 11 October 1965. Stewart advised: 'I am bound to say that the American response was not very reassuring. Mr Rusk and Mr Ball were unable to give me any general assurance (which is understandable in that they will no doubt have to consult the President).'

⁵⁰ TNA: PRO, DO 183/619, Sir Arthur Snelling, CRO, to Private Secretary, Foreign Office, 13 October 1965. Snelling pointed out that the British Government had not decided to 'cut off all trade' with Rhodesia in the event of a UDI.

confidence in the Johnson administration was also shaken by Washington's apparent reluctance to support Britain's efforts to prevent a UDI.

U.S. diplomatic support for Britain

Throughout 1965 the U.S. Government kept a watchful eye on developments in Rhodesia, and on negotiations between Harold Wilson and Ian Smith. In its bilateral relations with the Rhodesian Government the U.S. Government made a number of efforts to dissuade Smith from moving towards a UDI, though the Rhodesian Front struggled to understand why the United States supported the British position and resented U.S. interference in Rhodesia's affairs. As the negotiations between the British and Rhodesian governments entered a critical phase, Wilson hoped that American pressure would exert a restraining influence on Rhodesia, but he discerned a degree of reticence in the U.S. Government that he felt was not in keeping with the special relationship. Wilson failed to appreciate, however, that the U.S. Government was not terribly well placed to discharge the deterrent role that he assigned to it.

In April 1965 the U.S. Representative on the United Nations Human Rights Commission, Marietta P. Tree, made an unequivocal statement on Rhodesia, in which she castigated the Rhodesian Government for its oppressive practices and refusal to move away from minority rule. She expressed support for British policy and emphasised the responsibility of the British Government for bringing Rhodesia to independence. She made clear the American view that 'the answer to the painful problems in Southern Rhodesia is not

immediate independence.’⁵¹ This statement was prompted by Rhodesian failure to comprehend that the Americans were squarely behind the British. The State Department thought that the Rhodesian Government ought to have been convinced of this when the U.S. Government refused a Rhodesian request to purchase some military aircraft.⁵² However, Salisbury protested the U.S. refusal in ‘exaggerated and derogatory terms.’⁵³ The State Department was incensed by the ‘insulting, offensive’ protest, and told the British Embassy that the U.S. Government was reluctant to receive the new Rhodesian Minister in Washington, Air Vice Marshal Bentley.⁵⁴ The poor state of bilateral relations between the United States and Rhodesia was exacerbated by a speech given by G. Mennen Williams, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, in which he stated unequivocally the position of the United States:

Let me make our position crystal clear, so there will be no misunderstanding. The United States will support the British Government to the fullest extent, if asked to do so, in its efforts to reach a solution of the Southern Rhodesian problem. We would also support the British

⁵¹ LBJL: NSF, Files of Edward K. Hamilton, Box 3, ‘Statement of Ambassador Marietta P. Tree to the United Nations Committee of Twenty Four’, 14 April 1965.

⁵² ANZ: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 11, G. R. Laking, New Zealand Ambassador, Washington, to Secretary of External Affairs, Wellington, 13 May 1965.

⁵³ LBJL: NSF, Files of Edward K. Hamilton, Box 3, McClelland to State Department, 16 April 1965.

⁵⁴ LBJL: NSF, UK Country File, Box 207, ‘Cables Vol. III 2/65–4/65’, Rusk to Kaiser, Cable No. 6875, 28 April 1965.

Government to the fullest extent, in case of a unilateral declaration of independence in Southern Rhodesia.⁵⁵

British officials reported that the speech had little impact in Salisbury.⁵⁶ It did, however, make relations difficult between Bentley and Williams. At their first meeting Williams 'launched out on a sharp ... and rather heavy footed denunciation of the Rhodesian Government and all its works' and annoyed Bentley by his reference to African politicians being 'in prison' instead of 'under restriction'. Williams urged the Rhodesian Government to show some willingness to start a dialogue with the African leaders, to which Bentley replied that his Government was ready but the Africans were not willing to conduct such a dialogue on any reasonable terms. Bentley also suggested that the United States might practice what it preached vis-à-vis Hanoi. The British Embassy observed: 'On this elevated note they seem to have parted the worst of friends' and advised it was unlikely that this particular dialogue could be pursued 'at all fruitfully in the foreseeable future.'⁵⁷

It was therefore evident by mid-1965 that the relationship between the Johnson administration and the Rhodesian Government had deteriorated way beyond the point where most Americans could exert any friendly influence, which meant that the United States could play almost no positive role in encouraging Rhodesia to adopt a more

⁵⁵ Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan: G. Mennen Williams Papers, State Department Files, Microfilm Edition, Series I, 'Correspondence', Reel 5, 'Speech to the Chicago Chapter of the American Federal Bar Association', 15 June 1965.

⁵⁶ TNA: PRO, DO 183/691, 'American Attitude to a UDI' (Extract), Salisbury F.S. No. 13 (65), Part II, 23 June 1965.

⁵⁷ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181873, Killick to Le Quesne, WCAD, Foreign Office, 1 July 1965.

flexible position in its negotiations with Britain.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the National Security Council (NSC) remained hopeful that the U.S. Government might 'be able to help at least marginally to forestall UDI.'⁵⁹ Prior to Ian Smith's departure for talks in London, the State Department instructed its Consul General in Salisbury to deliver an oral statement advising the Rhodesian Prime Minister that 'it would be a grievous error to assume that the United States could in any way condone an attempt of the Government of S[outhern] Rhodesia by unilateral action to deal with such important issues as are involved in the discussions which concern the future of your country.'⁶⁰ However, Sir Saville Garner blocked this message because he thought that it would antagonise Smith. Garner argued that since the ostensible purpose of Smith's visit to London was to reach agreement with the British Government, it would be a mistake to deliver a message that assumed he would fail to do so. The State Department yielded to Garner's advice and Consul General McClelland was instructed to tone down his message to simply indicate American concern and express hope that a solution would be found.⁶¹ This is significant, because it

⁵⁸ Former Secretary of State Dean Acheson was 'Smith's most famous champion in the United States'. After UDI he opposed the Johnson administration's policy of sanctions against Rhodesia and supported Rhodesia's claim for independence until his death in 1971. DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome*, pp. 147 and 151. See also Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American race relations in the global arena* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 197. The position that Acheson took after UDI suggests that he would not have been an ideal emissary before UDI because he was pro-Rhodesian.

⁵⁹ Memorandum, Komer to the President, 29 September 1965, *FRUS*, p. 807.

⁶⁰ Ball to McClelland, 29 September 1965, *FRUS*, p. 808.

⁶¹ *FRUS*, p. 808, note 3. Smith responded that he considered it 'ironic' that the British Government was appealing to the U.S. Government for assistance, alluding to the fact that it had itself established its independence by rebellion against the Crown. He asserted that the Rhodesian Government did not intend to do anything 'rash or irresponsible', but it was his duty to prevent Rhodesia from becoming infiltrated by

indicates that the State Department was willing to adopt a firmer deterrent line towards Rhodesia than CRO officials were prepared to countenance.

Further evidence of divergent thinking in London and Washington emerged shortly before Smith arrived in London. Wilson wrote to Johnson indicating his pessimism about the forthcoming talks and suggesting that once they broke down the President could 'approach Smith in whatever way you think best calculated to bring home to him the gravity of the step which he is apparently contemplating.'⁶² Ulric Haynes, a junior member of staff on the NSC, argued that Wilson's request for a presidential message to Smith *after* the breakdown of negotiations was a bad strategy: 'From the point of view of U.S. interests, our deterrent efforts should be aimed at encouraging a UK-Rhodesian accommodation *before* the break-down. The minute the break-down occurs, the UDI ball bounces out of the UK court where assorted players like the Afro-Asians and Communists are waiting to take a swing at it.'⁶³ However, George Ball was extremely resistant to the idea of presidential involvement in the Rhodesian Crisis. He told National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy that the U.S. position should be to follow the British lead, so that if there was a 'blowup' the British would not be able to turn on the U.S. Government. Although Bundy was also opposed to presidential involvement, he felt that 'For Smith to go to London with the idea that the Americans don't give a damn is a mistake'''. Bundy and Ball therefore agreed that an approach should be made, but this

Communists. To that end the Rhodesian Government would if necessary take extreme measures and Smith hoped that the U.S. Government would refrain from interfering in the situation. He also warned that if sanctions were imposed on Rhodesia then the effects would be felt in Zambia and Malawi. McClelland to State Department, Cable No. 163, 2 October 1965, *FRUS*, p. 811.

⁶² Ball to Rusk, New York, Cable No. 53, 2 October 1965, *FRUS*, p. 814.

⁶³ LBJL: NSF, Files of Ulric Haynes, Box 1, Memorandum, Haynes to Bundy, 2 October 1965.

should not be presented as coming directly from the President.⁶⁴ Accordingly, Ball instructed the U.S. Embassy in London to advise Ian Smith that: ‘The United States Government does not intend to deviate from its course of strong support for Her Majesty’s Government’s position now and – if it occurs – after a unilateral declaration of independence.’⁶⁵ The U.S. Government was therefore steering a middle course, trying to meet British expectations of support without becoming too deeply involved in the Rhodesian Crisis.

The London talks broke down as Wilson had predicted, but he planned to fly to Salisbury in late October in a last effort to avert a UDI. At this juncture some officials within the State Department felt that the British Government should stiffen its resolve to take drastic retaliatory action against Rhodesia if a UDI did occur, including ‘a total embargo, supported by the Commonwealth, and the props knocked out from under the Rhodesian pound,’ which was somewhat at variance with the earlier emphasis on a cautious approach so as not to endanger the Zambian economy.⁶⁶ Ironically, the British

⁶⁴ Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, 5 October 1965, *FRUS*, p. 816.

⁶⁵ Ball to Kaiser, Cable No. 1790, 6 October 1965, *FRUS*, 819-20. Smith replied that the Rhodesian Government was approaching the negotiations ‘in a spirit of goodwill and conciliation’ but asserted that it had the support of both Europeans and Africans for independence on the basis of the 1961 Constitution. He went on to state: ‘The Rhodesian Government would be failing in their duty not only to themselves but to the ordinary people of the country and to the cause of Western civilisation on the continent of Africa’ if they conceded to immediate majority rule. Kaiser to State Department, Cable No. 1569, 9 October 1965, *FRUS*, p. 821.

⁶⁶ ANZ, Wellington: ABHS 950, W4627, 245/8/3, Part 13, Box 4170, Totara, Washington, to Secretary of External Affairs, Wellington, Cable No. 648, 2 October 1965. Totara reported that Edward Mulcahy, Deputy Director, Office of Eastern and Southern African Affairs, had expressed these views to the staff of the New Zealand Embassy.

Government was doubtful that the U.S. Government would take sufficient economic measures against Rhodesia in the event of a UDI. A few days after the Washington talks involving Stewart and Rusk, the State Department received a worrying report that Wilson had formed an impression that the United States was 'rather reserved on the whole subject' and that if a UDI did occur and sanctions were imposed 'he was not at all sure that [the] U.S. was as close to [the] British line as he would have hoped and still hoped we would be.'⁶⁷ The NSC was alarmed by this report, which arrived in the middle of a bureaucratic battle concerning the degree of support that the United States should give to Britain. George Ball took the view that a UDI was inevitable and argued that the United States should disengage from the situation, but the NSC contended that the U.S. Government should try to deter Rhodesia by issuing a statement that it intended to support economic sanctions in the event of a UDI.⁶⁸ The matter was referred to Rusk, who instructed the U.S. Embassy in London to advise Wilson: 'Our considered judgment is that any further public statement at this eleventh hour would run the risk of driving the Smith government further into a corner and stiffening their desperate resolve.' However, Rusk assured Wilson that he had the support of the President Johnson, who had no objection if Wilson wished to convey that fact to Smith during his negotiations.⁶⁹ At this

⁶⁷ LBJL: NSF, UK Country File, Box 209, 'Memos Vol. VII 10/65-1/66', Harlan Cleveland, Paris, to State Department, POLTO 549, 20 October 1965. Cleveland was U.S. Ambassador to NATO and former Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs.

⁶⁸ LBJL: NSF, Rhodesia Country File, Box 97, 'Memos and Misc., 12/63-1/66', Memorandum, Haynes to Komer, 19 October 1965; and Memorandum, Haynes to Bundy, 20 October 1965.

⁶⁹ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181893, Rusk to Bruce, Cable No. 2129, 22 October 1965; *FRUS*, p. 828. The British Ambassador in Washington also advised that State Department officials had stressed that George Ball's legalistic emphasis should not be interpreted as 'illustrative of a general dragging of feet by the

stage, therefore, senior figures in the U.S. Government were still trying to avoid direct presidential involvement in the Rhodesian Crisis, which fell short of British expectations.

Wilson flew to Salisbury on 24 October for talks with the Rhodesian Government, African Nationalist leaders, church leaders, and the business community. Wilson found that the Rhodesian Government was ‘impervious to argument ... collectively like a suicide on a windowsill waiting to jump.’ However, Wilson also found some doubt in Salisbury about the attitude of the United States towards a UDI and therefore requested that Johnson send an unequivocal personal message to Smith, delivered through the U.S. Consul General in Salisbury, which might act as a deterrent.⁷⁰ Bundy advised the President that Ball had agreed that they could not reject Wilson’s request.⁷¹ Johnson therefore sent Smith a vague warning that in the event of a UDI the United States did not intend to change its ‘course of firm support for the British Government,’ and that ‘in addition to all its other consequences, [UDI] would inevitably break the strong ties of friendship and understanding which have bound our countries together in war and peace.’⁷² In his reply Smith thanked Johnson for his interest and assured him (disingenuously) that ‘it is the firm intention of [the] Rhodesian Government to seek solution of its problems with [the] British Government through patient negotiations and

Americans in regard to the question of a possible UDI.’ TNA: PRO, DO 183/619, Dean to Foreign Office, Cable No. 2714, 21 October 1965.

⁷⁰ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181893, Wilson to Johnson, Cable No. 1494, UK High Commission, Salisbury, to UK Embassy, Washington, 29 October 1965; *FRUS*, pp. 829-30.

⁷¹ Bundy to the President, 29 October 1965, *FRUS*, p. 829.

⁷² Johnson to Smith, Cable No. 342, Washington to U.S. Consul General, Salisbury, 29 October 1965, *FRUS*, p. 830.

discussion.⁷³ Smith had already decided upon a UDI, so Johnson's warning had no impact.⁷⁴ State Department officials obviously did not know quite how ineffectual American representations were, but they were concerned that the media in Salisbury was playing down the significance of U.S. approaches to the Rhodesian Government.⁷⁵ Wilson's pressure for presidential involvement in the Rhodesian Crisis ultimately had no positive effect, but it did generate considerable bureaucratic conflict in the Johnson administration and placed a strain on Anglo-American relations.

Noer has commented: 'The American position on the eve of UDI thus remained as it had been for nearly four years: dedicated to support of Great Britain yet unclear on any precise policies.'⁷⁶ It was not surprising that intense frustration and even hostility towards Britain permeated parts of the U.S. bureaucracy. George Ball might well have agreed with the assessment of one U.S. diplomat who thought that the Labour Government had made 'a traditional British mess' of its dealings with Rhodesia.⁷⁷ When the Rhodesian Government finally declared itself independent on 11 November 1965 it caught the U.S. Government unprepared. The President and his senior advisers were at

⁷³ Smith to Johnson, Cable No. 281, U.S. Consul General, Salisbury, to Washington, 1 November 1965, *FRUS*, p. 832.

⁷⁴ According to the Rhodesian Intelligence Chief, Ken Flower, the Rhodesian Security Council decided on 19 October 1965 to proceed with a UDI. *Serving Secretly: An Intelligence Chief on Record. Rhodesia into Zimbabwe 1964-1981* (London: John Murray, 1987), p. 47.

⁷⁵ TNA: PRO, DO 183/691, Dean to Foreign Office, Cable No. 2607, 13 October 1965.

⁷⁶ Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, p. 196.

⁷⁷ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181881, Ronald Burroughs, British Embassy, Lisbon, to Derek Dodson, Central Department, Foreign Office, 22 October 1965. Burroughs reported the views of Admiral George Anderson, U.S. Ambassador to Lisbon.

his ranch in Austin, conducting a major review of Vietnam policy and the only decision that Dean Rusk could announce to the press was that the U.S. Government would recall its Consul General from Salisbury.⁷⁸ Further measures were announced at the United Nations the following day but it took until 19 November for the State Department to produce a detailed analysis of the Rhodesian Crisis and the range of available options.⁷⁹ However, continuing British prevarication encumbered the American response, as Assistant Secretary of State G. Mennen Williams complained: ‘The U.S. is anxious to support [the British] but we do not understand the general outlines of their program or what their over-all thinking is.’⁸⁰ One month after UDI, ‘American policy remained a mixture of public support of Wilson and private grumblings about his tentativeness and imprecision.’⁸¹ This illustrates just how frustrated and confused Anglo-American relations became during the period leading up to Rhodesia’s UDI and beyond. To explain how and why these strains occurred within the special relationship, theories of alliance politics can be applied to the Rhodesian Crisis.

Explaining the frustration in Anglo-American relations

International relations theory addresses the general propositions that may be advanced about the political relations between states. A key component of the literature on international relations is alliance theory, which examines the reasons why alliances are formed, how they are maintained, and why they collapse. The Anglo-American special

⁷⁸ Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, p. 198; DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome*, p. 113.

⁷⁹ Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, p. 200.

⁸⁰ Williams to Ball, 24 November 1965, Williams Papers, Box 5, National Archives, Washington. Quoted in Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, p. 202.

⁸¹ Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, p. 203.

relationship is an obvious case study for testing such theories.⁸² Writing in 1970 about the Suez and Skybolt crises, Richard Neustadt discerned a pattern of crisis behavior in Anglo-American relations that consisted of muddled perceptions, stifled communications, disappointed expectations, and paranoid reactions.⁸³ He argued that whilst the first three elements were common enough in the international states system, the fourth tends to be found only in intimate relationships such as those that exist between London and Washington: ‘paranoid reactions are associated with relations bearing something like the burden of an unrequited love.’⁸⁴ Although the Rhodesian Crisis was obviously not as serious as either Suez or Skybolt, Neustadt’s approach is nevertheless useful for analysing Anglo-American relations during the Rhodesian Crisis.

Neustadt observed that a number of factors contribute to misperception between allies, including clash of personalities, divergence in policy, and different orders of priority.⁸⁵ There is little to suggest that poor personal relations inhibited Anglo-American understanding during the Rhodesian Crisis. Prominent members of the Johnson administration were well aware that Wilson and other senior members of the Labour Government attached considerable significance to their relations with the U.S. administration and were conscious of their personal standing in Washington.⁸⁶ Johnson

⁸² John Baylis, ‘The Anglo-American Relationship and Alliance Theory’, *International Relations*, Vol. 8 (November 1985), p. 368.

⁸³ Richard Neustadt, *Alliance Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 56.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

⁸⁶ Shortly before the Washington talks in December 1964, Bundy advised Johnson: ‘It is extremely clear on all the evidence that Wilson has staked a great deal on having a “successful” visit with you.’ LBJL: NSF, UK Country File, Box 214, ‘UK Prime Minister Wilson Visit’, Memorandum, Bundy to the President, 5

was not by nature an enthusiastic Anglophile and indeed Wilson was well aware of this, which is why he worked hard to gain Johnson's trust.⁸⁷ Noer observes that prior to their meeting in December 1965 – at which UDI was discussed extensively – relations between Wilson and Johnson 'had been rather cool,' but on this occasion Wilson 'greatly impressed' the President.⁸⁸ Wilson was obviously concerned to establish a good working relationship with Johnson and in this he largely succeeded, though he was perhaps inclined to exaggerate its intimacy.⁸⁹ However, the degree of friendship between Wilson

December 1964. There is, of course, a distinction to be drawn between Labour revisionists and those on the left of the Party regarding their attitudes towards the United States. See Peter Jones, *America and the British Labour Party* (New York, I.B. Tauris, 1997), p. 124; and Steven Fielding, 'Labour revisionists and the imagining of America', in Jonathan Hollowell (ed.), *Twentieth Century Anglo-American Relations* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), Ch.5.

⁸⁷ Wilson met Johnson during a visit to Washington earlier in 1964, whilst Wilson was still Leader of the Opposition. Wilson recalled in his memoirs that on that occasion Johnson had told him he did not trust British Prime Ministers because it seemed to him that their visits to Washington were mainly about cultivating British domestic opinion. Johnson repeated this view to Wilson in December 1964 and, in an attempt to put Johnson at ease, Wilson assured him that his public statements on Anglo-American relations would correspond entirely with what he said to the President. Harold Wilson, *The Labour Government 1964-1970* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, and Michael Joseph), pp. 46-47.

⁸⁸ Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, p. 204.

⁸⁹ Dick Crossman was amused by the hyperbole in Wilson's account of the warmth and significance of his relationship with LBJ. See R. H. S. Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister. Volume 1, Minister of Housing 1964-1966* (London: Hamish Hamilton and Jonathan Cape, 1975), p. 94, entry for 11 December 1964. On the other hand, the U.S. Ambassador to London, David Bruce, suggested that Wilson and Johnson found considerable common ground, enjoying private talks about their respective domestic political situations. LBJL: Oral Histories, Transcript of Interview, 9 December 1971, pp. 10-11. Historians have advanced several interpretations of the nature of the relationship between Wilson and Johnson. For a brief summary of these views see John W. Young, *The Labour Governments 1964-70. Volume 2*,

and Johnson does not really shed much light on the reasons for misperception during the Rhodesian Crisis, since relations can become strained irrespective of the degree of cordiality between principals.⁹⁰

There is also little evidence of divergence in policy between the United States and the United Kingdom with regard to the Rhodesian issue. One contemporary commentator, Waldemar Nielsen, observed: ‘In the past, the U.S. has perhaps taken too dutiful and passive a stance in its dealings with Great Britain on the Rhodesian question.’ Nielsen suggested that if the U.S. Government deemed British policy too weak then ‘the only sensible course for the U.S. would be to separate itself from its ally and seek an independent line of action.’⁹¹ Yet this was never on the cards before UDI, since American interests (domestic and foreign) were best served by a pro-African and pro-British policy. This also remained true for a few years after UDI, but when Rhodesia declared itself a republic in 1969 – and it became apparent that the British Government had all but abandoned any pretence of being able to influence developments – the United States did indeed begin to pursue a separate policy. As a result of Henry Kissinger’s

International Policy (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 20-22. For a more detailed discussion see Sylvia Ellis, ‘Lyndon B. Johnson, Harold Wilson and the Vietnam war: a not so special relationship?’, in Hollowell (ed.), *Twentieth Century Anglo-American Relations*, pp. 180-204; Jonathan Colman, ‘Harold Wilson, Lyndon Johnson and Anglo-American “Summit Diplomacy”, 1964–68’, *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2003), pp. 131-151; and idem, *A ‘Special Relationship’? Harold Wilson, Lyndon B. Johnson and Anglo-American Relations ‘at the Summit’, 1964–68* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

⁹⁰ Neustadt, *Alliance Politics*, p. 57.

⁹¹ W. A. Nielsen, *African Battle Line: American Policy Choices in Southern Africa* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 56.

influence American policy became more favorable towards the white Rhodesians, which was consistent with a forward anti-Communist foreign policy. According to one commentator, the results of this shift were illegal, since it involved breaking UN mandatory sanctions; and immoral, because it abandoned the principle of democracy in Rhodesia.⁹²

Certainly, it can be argued that different orders of priority were evident in London and Washington during the Rhodesian Crisis. Interestingly, Wilson's Foreign Office Private Secretary Sir Oliver Wright thought that although Rhodesia took up a lot of time, it was a 'problem of the second order' when compared with East-West relations.⁹³ Nevertheless, it was a problem that commanded far more attention at a higher level in London than in Washington. This is not surprising as much of Johnson's time was (quite naturally) absorbed by the escalation of U.S. involvement in Vietnam.⁹⁴ The other major concern for the Johnson administration during 1965 was the Dominican Republic, where some 33,000 troops were deployed to crush a rebellion.⁹⁵ Terence Lyons has noted that Africa

⁹² T. L. Hughes, 'Foreword', in Lake, *The 'Tar Baby' Option*, pp. vii-x.

⁹³ Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge: British Diplomatic Oral History Project, GBR/0014/DOHP 17, Sir John Oliver Wright, Transcript of Interview, 18 September 1996, pp. 12-13.

⁹⁴ Dean Rusk refuted the suggestion that Vietnam distracted Johnson from other problems: 'There were times when for weeks on end President Johnson would give more time to Europe or to the Middle East or to Latin America than he did to Viet Nam.' LBJL: Oral Histories, Transcript of Interview, 8 March 1970, p. 1. One recent study that tends to support Rusk's defense of Johnson is Thomas Alan Schwartz, *Lyndon Johnson and Europe: In the Shadow of Vietnam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

⁹⁵ DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome*, p. 104.

was a very low priority on Johnson's foreign policy agenda.⁹⁶ Andrew DeRoche agrees, but has argued that Johnson demonstrated a 'personal interest in the Southern Rhodesian conflict'.⁹⁷ However, there is clear evidence to the contrary, which suggests that the President was in fact keen to deflect the issue. Shortly after UDI the staff on the NSC learned from the State Department's Bureau of African Affairs that senior figures in the administration were being 'kept under wraps on Rhodesia by the President's strong desire not to be bothered with another major problem at this time.'⁹⁸ Similarly, although Dean Rusk was involved in several high-level meetings with British ministers in which the Rhodesian problem was discussed, he had little time for, or interest in, African matters. Rusk later observed that during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations the United States was a 'junior partner' in Africa, which was reflected in the fact that 75 per cent of African aid came from Western Europe and only 25 per cent from the U.S. Rusk thought that was an appropriate arrangement because Europe had relatively little involvement in other regions such as Latin America and Asia.⁹⁹ Rusk's indifference meant that

⁹⁶ Terence Lyons, 'Keeping Africa off the Agenda', in Warren I. Cohen and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker (eds.), *Lyndon Johnson Confronts the World: American Foreign Policy 1963-1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 245-78.

⁹⁷ DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome*, p. 8. DeRoche does qualify his observation by stating that the President's interest was not sufficient to overturn the 'middle course' that had hitherto characterised U.S. policy towards Africa.

⁹⁸ LBJL: NSF, Name File, Box 6, 'Komer Memos', Vol. II (1), Komer to Bundy, 3 December 1965.

⁹⁹ LBJL: Oral Histories, Transcript of Interview, 8 March 1970, pp. 33-34; and D. Rusk, *As I Saw It* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), p. 273. Averell Harriman (U.S. ambassador at large) echoed Rusk's view when he visited Harold Wilson in London. TNA: PRO, PREM 13/316, ff 2-5, 'Haute politique: thoughts for the weekend', Minute by Oliver Wright to Harold Wilson, 12 February 1965, in S. R. Ashton and Wm. Roger Louis (eds.), *British Documents on the End of Empire Series A, Volume 5, East of Suez and the Commonwealth, Part II: Europe, Rhodesia, Commonwealth* (London: The Stationery Office, 2004), p. 1.

management of the Rhodesian problem consequently devolved upon George Ball, whose approach was cautious to say the least. Although Ball was keen not to prejudice relations with the United Kingdom he felt that on the Rhodesian issue the British were 'playing a game of trying to push us out in front'.¹⁰⁰ Ball did not believe that the United States could shape societies and events in the Third World and he saw the Rhodesian problem as a secondary issue on which American action was neither possible nor desirable.¹⁰¹ With the most senior policy-makers in the Johnson administration trying to marginalise the Rhodesian problem it might be argued that there was an increased likelihood of misperception between London and Washington. However, as Neustadt acknowledged, different orders of priority are commonplace and this does not produce a state of continual crisis in relations.¹⁰² It may be argued, then, that the interaction of personalities, degree of policy divergence, and differences in orders of priority, do not provide a convincing explanation of the frustration in Anglo-American relations during the Rhodesian Crisis.

In his analysis of the Suez and Skybolt crises, Neustadt suggested that communications were stifled by concerns that 'any word to friends across the ocean may come back to other ears at home. As well, a word to friends at home may skip across the water.'¹⁰³ Neustadt also recognised that in addition to reticence, communications were often inhibited by complicated embassy arrangements and failure to make effective use of established channels of communication. He observed that the embassies in London and

¹⁰⁰ Memorandum of Telephone Conversation between Ball and Bundy, 5 October 1965, *FRUS*, p. 816.

¹⁰¹ Lake, *The 'Tar Baby' Option*, p. 69.

¹⁰² Neustadt, *Alliance Politics*, p. 59.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

Washington consisted of many different departments that tended to deal only with their official counterparts, which failed to yield a coherent view of ministerial motives. Further, as the ambassadors only acted on instructions – which did not contain the pointed questions necessary to obtain clarity – crucial details remained missing. Neustadt therefore implied that, as a matter of routine, ambassadors must be permitted to use their own initiative to ask the questions that may give an insight into ministerial motives.¹⁰⁴

During the Rhodesian Crisis there was some evidence of reticence on the American side, which perhaps reflected Ball's unwillingness to be 'pushed out in front' on the Rhodesian problem. It is remarkable that the New Zealand Embassy was often better informed about concerns in Washington than the British Embassy, especially as the latter has been perceived as such a crucial element in the effective functioning of the special relationship.¹⁰⁵ Perhaps more significant than reticence, however, were the regular difficulties created by breakdowns in communication, which emanated from the structural problems in Anglo-American relations at this time. In late 1963, following a suggestion that U.S. and British regional policy could be effectively co-ordinated through the British Embassy in Washington, the U.S. Government considered the removal of its regional specialists in the Political Section of the U.S. Embassy in London. The U.S. Ambassador to London, David Bruce, argued a strong case for retention of the regional specialists. Bruce observed that the structure of British policy making militated against the co-ordination of policy through the British Embassy in Washington. Bruce noted that

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 132-34.

¹⁰⁵ See Michael F. Hopkins, 'Focus of a Changing Relationship: The Washington Embassy and Britain's World Role Since 1945', *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Autumn 1998), pp. 103-14; and Gillian Staerck (ed.), 'The Role of the British Embassy in Washington', *ibid.*, pp. 115-38.

responsibility for British relations with Africa, Asia and Latin America was divided between the Foreign Office, the Commonwealth Relations Office, and the Colonial Office. Some of the 'hottest' foreign policy problems (which by the following year included Rhodesia) therefore fell outside the remit of the Foreign Office. Although the Commonwealth Relations Office and the Colonial Office were represented on the staff of the British Embassy in Washington they tended to regard the Embassy as 'the arm of "another government agency," without "primary" interest and responsibility for the areas which come within the purview of these two ministries.' The recommendations of the British Embassy in Washington therefore carried more weight with the Foreign Office than with the other two ministries.¹⁰⁶ Bruce argued that the State Department required its own channel of communication on regional matters with each of the British ministries and suggested that greater emphasis should be placed on the links provided by the regional specialists:

Not infrequently, when we have a 'regional' position to sell the British, we initiate the matter with the British Embassy in Washington. Our position does not 'sell' in London, and at that point the State Department calls on one of the Embassy regional specialists in London to straighten the matter out. Our regional specialist often finds that the British position has too far jelled, personal prestige has become too involved, to salvage as much for the American position as might be desired.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan: G. Mennen Williams Papers, State Department Files, Microfilm Edition, Series V, 'Miscellaneous', Reel 14, Memorandum, Bruce to Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs William R. Tyler, 5 November 1963.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Bruce concluded that the regional specialists should therefore be entrusted with ‘the initial sales effort,’ since they had the advantage of being able to conduct face-to-face talks with British policy-makers, ‘to feel out the ground and to proceed accordingly.’¹⁰⁸ One year later, Averell Harriman echoed the concerns expressed by Bruce regarding the structure of British policy-making, but this time American concerns were addressed directly to the British Government. He told Patrick Gordon Walker that the U.S. Government experienced difficulties in dealing with the Commonwealth Relations Office, which was regarded as ‘a second Foreign Office in the important parts of the world.’ Walker responded to these concerns by assuring Harriman that the Commonwealth Secretary, Arthur Bottomley, would give his full co-operation in matters of Anglo-American interest.¹⁰⁹ Yet despite this assurance it is clear from the documentary evidence that the division of responsibility within the British Government for Rhodesian matters militated against effective communication and co-ordination with the U.S. Government. In May 1965, one Foreign Office official wrote:

I am afraid it is clear that the CRO have not done any thinking on this question. It is one of the great faults of the Sub-Committee on Rhodesia that although many papers have been prepared on detailed aspects of a unilateral declaration of independence nothing has been written about the reactions of Afro-Asian Governments, the [Organisation for African Unity] and the United Nations, and the effect on our international position

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ LBJL: NSF UK Country File, Box 212, ‘Walker Visit Briefing Book’, Memorandum, Harriman to Bundy, 27 October 1964.

if [Her Majesty's Government] did nothing to put an effective end to the rebellion.¹¹⁰

As long as such major questions remained unanswered it was impossible for the British Government to give a clear indication of its policy to the U.S. Government, which explains why American policy-makers such as Ball felt such intense frustration throughout the period leading up to UDI and beyond. The problem of poor communication was exacerbated by the fact that the American Embassy in London had its own institutional weaknesses. Bruce had a 'hands off' style of management, which meant that his staff enjoyed considerable leeway and Bruce often did not see much of the correspondence that went out of the embassy, or get around as much as senior British officials would have liked.¹¹¹ This lack of supervision and contact may help to explain the origins of American misinformation, such as the 'tendentious' reports by Wendell Coote on the Rhodesian problem.

Neustadt observed that since Britain and the United States are such close allies, both sides 'habitually expect accommodation for themselves.'¹¹² Consequently, expectations were disappointed on several occasions in London and Washington during the Rhodesian Crisis. Harold Wilson, for example, over-estimated the significance of the United States as an actor in the Crisis. As the prospect of a UDI drew closer, he clung desperately to the idea that the United States might be able to help avert it by expressing its unequivocal

¹¹⁰ TNA: PRO, FO 371/181877, Minute by Derrick March, WCAD, Foreign Office, 24 May 1965.

¹¹¹ Jonathan Colman, 'The London Ambassadorship of David K. E. Bruce During the Wilson-Johnson Years, 1964-68', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2004), pp. 330-31.

¹¹² Neustadt, *Alliance Politics*, p. 66.

support for Britain and warning the Rhodesians of the dire consequences of unilateral action. Yet this vague hope was unrealistic, as the state of relations between the United States and Rhodesia was not much better than the relationship between Britain and Rhodesia. Moreover, U.S. trade with Rhodesia was relatively insignificant, so the Rhodesian Government was not greatly influenced by the prospect of American sanctions. A further cause of disappointment in London was that the British Government hoped (despite its protestations to the contrary) that the U.S. Government would offset some of the financial burden that Britain faced as a result of economic sanctions against Rhodesia and the Zambia rescue operation. This misconception probably originated as a result of the massive assistance provided by the U.S. Government to defend sterling shortly after Wilson came to power.¹¹³ Thus, British policy-makers ‘perceived what they projected’ and in doing so ‘they set the stage for their own disappointment and its aftermath in paranoid reactions.’¹¹⁴ Yet the same is true of policy-makers in Washington, who failed to perceive accurately the reasons for British prevarication on the Rhodesian issue and became frustrated by their indecision. Wilson managed the Rhodesian problem in Cabinet sub-committees to avoid dissent in the full Cabinet, which is an important reason why so few authoritative decisions were taken before UDI.¹¹⁵ The division of responsibility between the Foreign Office and Commonwealth Relations Office also compounded British procrastination, though the U.S. administration was more aware of

¹¹³ The U.S. Government provided a \$3 billion currency package to end speculation against the pound. LBJL: NSF, UK Country File, Box 213, ‘Off-the-Record Meeting of the President With Prime Minister Wilson’, Memorandum of Conversation, 7 December 1964. The sensitivity of the meeting is clear from the minutes, which record: ‘It was agreed to begin with that this was a meeting which never occurred.’

¹¹⁴ Neustadt, *Alliance Politics*, p. 69.

¹¹⁵ Crossman wrote: ‘quite elaborate contingency plans for action existed but nobody wanted to reveal what they were’. *Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, Vol. 1, p. 344, entry for 8 October 1965.

the problems that this created in respect of Rhodesian policy. However, there is clearly some validity in Neustadt's contention that disappointed expectations can be explained by the failure to appreciate the differing political contexts that exist in London and Washington.¹¹⁶

In his analysis of the Suez and Skybolt crises Neustadt contended that Anglo-American friendship contributed to unquestioned expectations of mutual support, and when such expectations were disappointed it resulted in paranoid reactions on both sides. This contention is also supported by an examination of the Rhodesian Crisis, in which fears about abandonment and entrapment permeated governments in London and Washington. In this analysis, the concept of 'the secondary alliance dilemma' is extremely useful.¹¹⁷ Glenn Snyder has observed that the alliance security dilemma has two phases. In the primary phase the dilemma is whether or not to form an alliance in order to achieve greater security, but in the secondary phase the dilemma involves the extent of support to be given to an ally in a conflict situation. In the secondary phase the fear of being abandoned by one's ally is always present and abandonment may take a variety of forms: diplomatic realignment, abrogation of the alliance contract, failure to make good on explicit commitments, or failure to provide support in contingencies where support is expected.¹¹⁸ In the Rhodesian Crisis, the British Government obviously feared the last scenario, as evidenced by Harold Wilson's pessimism over U.S. commitment to economic sanctions in October 1965. Also characteristic of the secondary phase of the alliance

¹¹⁶ Neustadt, *Alliance Politics*, p. 69.

¹¹⁷ Glenn H. Snyder, 'The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics', *World Politics*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 4 (July 1984), p. 466.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

security dilemma is fear of entrapment, which means ‘being dragged into a conflict over an ally’s interests that one does not share, or shares only partially.’¹¹⁹ Clearly, this was what concerned the U.S. Government throughout 1965, as indicated by George Ball’s anxiousness not to be ‘pushed out in front’ on the Rhodesian issue.¹²⁰

Conclusion

This chapter has focused upon a relatively neglected area of historical research, demonstrating that attempts to co-ordinate policy on the Rhodesian issue were a significant feature of Anglo-American relations in the Wilson-Johnson era. To be sure, British and American interests were asymmetrical; Britain had far more to lose as a result of a UDI than the United States. Nevertheless, the U.S. Government considered it essential to support the British throughout the period of their negotiations with the Rhodesians, but without becoming too deeply involved in the Crisis. As Anthony Lake has commented, ‘Their approach was to find and follow the course of least resistance.’¹²¹ The United States established a policy very early on of following the British lead, which constituted an unusual departure from the normal pattern of relations between the two states. However, this depended upon effective consultation and co-ordinated action, which was sorely lacking primarily as a result of structural weaknesses and bureaucratic conflict on both sides. The Rhodesian Crisis therefore gave rise to mutual fears of

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 467.

¹²⁰ After UDI Harold Wilson was enthusiastic about the possible appointment of a State Department coordinator on the Rhodesian problem. Ball told Bundy: ‘because of this we had felt we were being trapped.’ LBJL: Box 6, GB, ‘S. Rhodesia 10/2/65–5/10/66’, Memorandum of Telephone Conversation between Ball and Bundy, 29 November 1965. Cited in DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome*, pp. 120-21.

¹²¹ Lake, *The ‘Tar Baby’ Option*, p. 60.

entrapment and abandonment, which exacerbated problems in the special relationship posed by thornier issues such as Vietnam. This chapter has also sought to demonstrate the principle that 'history must be regarded as the proving ground for theory; it provides the acid test against which general propositions about political behaviour can be either verified or falsified.'¹²² The chapter has argued that although Neustadt's analytical framework is now well over thirty years old it still retains considerable utility for comprehending the misunderstandings and frustrations within the special relationship during the Wilson-Johnson period, at least in relation to the Rhodesian Crisis. However, one case study does not of course prove the general utility of a theory, and other scholars might therefore wish to consider Neustadt's paradigm in relation to other aspects of Anglo-American relations during the Wilson-Johnson era.

¹²² J. C. Garnett, *Commonsense and the Theory of International Politics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), p. 5. Quoted in Baylis, 'The Anglo-American Relationship and Alliance Theory', p. 368.

Chapter Seven

U.S. Domestic Politics and the Rhodesian Crisis

Introduction

As the previous chapter has demonstrated, the Rhodesian Crisis was a significant focus of Anglo-American relations during 1964 and 1965. It also suggested that bureaucratic conflict in the U.S. Government contributed to the problems involved in Anglo-American consultation and cooperation. This chapter develops that theme in detail, by briefly outlining the bureaucratic politics model and then examining the battles fought within the Johnson administration over its Rhodesia policy. Particular attention is paid to the role of G. Mennen Williams, a former Governor of the State of Michigan with a strong record on civil rights, who was Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs between 1961 and 1966.¹ This chapter focuses on the same policy issues discussed in the previous chapter –

¹ Gerhard Mennem Williams (1911-1988). Born in Detroit to parents Henry P. Williams and Elma Mennen. His maternal grandfather founded the Mennen Company, which manufactured toiletries, hence his nickname ‘Soapy.’ Graduated Princeton (1933) and University of Michigan Law School (1936). Despite his family’s Republican sympathies, in 1948 he stood as a Democrat and was elected Governor of Michigan and served in that capacity until 1960, when he was appointed Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. Resigned March 1966 to campaign in Michigan for election to the Senate, but was defeated by Republican incumbent. Served as Ambassador to the Philippines, 1968-69. Elected to Michigan Supreme Court in 1970 and became Chief Justice in 1982, in which capacity he remained until mandatory retirement in 1986. See William Howard Moore, ‘Williams, G. Mennen’, in J. A. Garraty and M. C. Carnes (eds.), *American National Biography*, Vol. 23 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 462-64. See also Thomas J. Noer, *Soapy: A Biography of G. Mennen Williams* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005).

maintenance of the Zambian economy, and U.S. diplomatic support for Britain – but this time seeks to demonstrate how and why Williams failed to overturn the U.S. Government’s cautious approach to, and limited involvement in, these aspects of the Rhodesian Crisis. The chapter then goes on to briefly outline the pluralist perspective of U.S. foreign policy formulation and analyses the reasons why interest groups – particularly African-American interest groups that naturally sought to exert influence in foreign policy matters involving questions of race – made little impact on the U.S. Government’s Rhodesia policy.

The bureaucratic politics model and divisions over Rhodesia in the U.S. Government

The bureaucratic politics approach to foreign policy analysis was inaugurated over thirty years ago with the publication of Graham T. Allison’s *Essence of Decision*. Building on the work of political scientists and organisational theorists, Allison examined U.S. policymaking during the Cuban Missile Crisis. He refuted the ‘rational actor’ model, which posits the idea that governments are unified actors who make purposeful choices between alternative courses of action in order to best serve the national interest. Rather, Allison argued, the actions of the Kennedy administration during October 1962 were better understood not as rational choices but as *resultants* that emerged from ‘compromise, conflict, and confusion of officials with diverse interests and unequal influence.’² According to this view, policymaking should be seen as an outcome of

² Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), p. 138. Also quoted in J. Garry Clifford, ‘Bureaucratic Politics’, in Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Peterson (eds.), *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 143.

conflict between competing bureaucratic factions within the government, each of which seeks to advance its own interests and interpretation of the national interest. The bureaucratic politics model tends to work well when it is applied to studies of U.S. policy because of the number of departments and executive agencies involved in the policymaking process, and their willingness to use the public arena, as Philip Darby has observed:

Within the executive branch, under the President, the responsibility for foreign affairs is shared between the State Department, various other departments and agencies such as the Departments of Defense and Commerce, and the White House Office advisers. Perhaps inevitably, there has been a tendency for these bodies to speak publicly with different voices. It is thus of the nature of the American system that there is a fuller airing of different points of view and that positions are more often exaggerated or disguised for the purposes of bargaining than is true of most Western countries.³

The bureaucratic politics model lends itself very well to understanding the divisions within the U.S. Government on Rhodesia, and the making of U.S. Rhodesia policy during the mid-1960s. Anthony Lake (who served in the State Department from 1962) identified three groups in the Johnson administration with differing views on the Rhodesian problem. First, anti-Smith advocates of relatively strong American action. Second, advocates of any policy that would preserve American economic and military interests in

³ P. Darby, *Three Faces of Imperialism: British and American Approaches to Asia and Africa 1870-1970* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 145.

Africa, especially white southern Africa. And third, senior figures who had no interest in the Rhodesian problem and wished to marginalise discussion by the advocates of more active policies.⁴ The last of these groups will be analysed first because its response to the Rhodesian problem conditioned the conflict over the issue within the American bureaucracy.

Within the U.S. executive branch the President is expected to give strong leadership in the field of foreign affairs. However, Lyndon Johnson began to prepare for the 1964 election almost immediately after being sworn in as President and his involvement in foreign policy during his first year in office was therefore muted.⁵ As noted in the previous chapter, once the President was able to focus on foreign affairs much of his attention was taken up with Vietnam. African problems generally, and the Rhodesian Crisis in particular, were not a priority for Johnson.⁶ In the absence of firm presidential leadership on Rhodesian policy, several government departments and executive agencies battled to articulate their interests. The State Department was of course central to the discussion and development of U.S. policy on Rhodesia, but its views were by no means monolithic. Secretary of State Dean Rusk was involved in discussions with British ministers about Rhodesia, but he left the issue largely in the hands of Undersecretary of State George Ball. Ball was not terribly sympathetic to the special relationship with Britain because he

⁴ A. Lake, *The 'Tar Baby' Option: American Policy Toward Southern Rhodesia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), pp. 64-70.

⁵ John Prados, *Keepers of the Keys: A History of the National Security Council from Truman to Bush* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1991), p. 148.

⁶ See above, Ch. 6, pp. 340-41.

felt that it tended to complicate U.S. relations with Europe.⁷ As discussed in the previous chapter, he felt that Rhodesia was a British problem and wanted to limit U.S. involvement.⁸ Ball enjoyed the loyalty of an extensive cadre of policymakers in several bureaus of the State Department, Johnson and Rusk trusted his judgment, and he was at the heart of policymaking on several key foreign policy issues (though he eventually resigned because he disagreed with Vietnam policy).⁹ Ball's pervasive influence was therefore a serious obstacle to those who wished to implement a more active U.S. policy on Rhodesia.

The attitudes of the two most senior figures within the State Department clashed with those of several subordinates. The most vocal proponents of a more active U.S. policy were found in the Bureau of African Affairs. G. Mennen Williams had been appointed Assistant Secretary of State by President Kennedy as a demonstration of the President's interest in African affairs, and it did not take Williams long to draw public attention to the administration's position. During a visit to East Africa in February 1961, a reporter in Nairobi asked Williams about U.S. policy towards Africa. Williams said: 'What we want

⁷ I am grateful to Dr. Andrew Priest, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, for this analysis. In his memoirs, Ball wrote: 'so long as the peoples of Europe remained emotionally and politically locked up within tight national borders, they would be unable to participate effectively in affairs outside their narrow parishes.' *The Past has another Pattern: Memoirs* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1982), p. 82. It has been suggested that Ball cannot be easily placed within the factions of the U.S. bureaucracy, as James A. Bill has observed: 'Ball was neither strictly a Third Worlder nor a Europeanist. Although his experience would seem to have placed him in the Europeanist camp, some analysts considered him a Third Worlder/Africanist.' *George Ball: Behind the Scenes in U. S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 140.

⁸ See above, Ch. 6, *passim*.

⁹ Bill, *George Ball*, pp. 68-75.

for Africa is what Africans want for themselves.’ The resulting headline – ‘Soapy Says Africa for the Africans’ – raised eyebrows in the United States and the United Kingdom.¹⁰ Williams and his deputy, J. Wayne Fredericks, were both deeply committed to the principle of majority rule in Rhodesia, and it has been suggested that this damaged their credibility within the bureaucracy.¹¹ However, their position was based on more than principle. In his statement to the House Appropriations Committee on the Foreign Assistance Act of 1965, Williams observed that:

A major objective of U.S. foreign policy and a concern of our AID [Agency for International Development] program is to help African countries become politically stable and economically viable, so they can maintain their own independence and resist Communist efforts at subversion.¹²

¹⁰ Kennedy defended Williams, saying that it ‘does not seem to me to be a very unreasonable statement ... I do not know who else Africa should be for.’ Williams explained that in his view the term ‘African’ was inclusive and did not refer to any particular race or colour. G. Mennen Williams, *Africa for the Africans* (Grand Rapids: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1969), p. 159. See also Noer, *Soapy*, Chapter VI, ‘Africa for the Africans. Williams and the New Frontier, 1961-63’, pp. 223-69.

¹¹ Lake, *The ‘Tar Baby’ Option*, p. 65. This issue is given further consideration below; see, ‘Neither welcome nor effective: explaining the limited influence of G. Mennen Williams and the Bureau of African Affairs’, pp. 371 ff.

¹² Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, [hereafter, BHL]: G. Mennen Williams Papers [hereafter, Williams Papers], Undersecretary of State for African Affairs, Administrative Materials 1961-1966, ‘Congressional Hearings 1961-1965’, Box 7-N, ‘Statement of the Honorable G. Mennen Williams, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Before the House Appropriations Committee on the Foreign Assistance Act of 1965’, [n.d.].

The Bureau of African Affairs repeated this strategic concern many times, but Johnson, Rusk, and Ball thought that it was exaggerated, and tended to be dismissive of warnings about Communist activities in Africa. The Bureau of African Affairs, however, was by no means isolated in its policy stance on Africa in general or the Rhodesian issue in particular. The United States Mission to the United Nations supported a tough line against Rhodesia because it was responsible for defending America's international position in an arena where African votes and rhetoric could not be ignored. The Bureau of International Organization Affairs shared these concerns about the image of the United States, and the Bureau of African Affairs also drew support from elements within the Office of the Legal Adviser and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research.¹³ By far the most important allies of the Bureau of African Affairs, however, were the staff on the National Security Council (NSC). Reporting to the National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy was Deputy Assistant Robert Komer, a former CIA analyst who was, *inter alia*, in charge of African affairs. Komer was sympathetic to Williams and Fredericks because he 'had long held the view that independence throughout Africa was inevitable and that the United States should do what it could to identify itself with anticolonialism.'¹⁴ Although Komer did not always agree with the tactics that the Bureau of African Affairs used to advance its views, or with its emphasis on aid as an instrument of U.S. policy, he often counselled against what he regarded as the excessively cautious approach of George Ball to U.S. policy on Rhodesia.¹⁵ However, there were limits to what Komer could achieve.

¹³ Lake, *The 'Tar Baby' Option*, pp. 66-7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹⁵ Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, Texas [hereafter, LBJL]: National Security File [hereafter, NSF], Rhodesia Country File, Box 97, 'Memos and Misc., 12/63-1/66', Komer to Bundy, 2 November 1965, for Komer's reaction to a suspected leak from the Bureau of African Affairs to the media. LBJL: NSF, Name File, Box 6, 'Komer Memos', Vol. II (1), Komer to the President, 19 June 1965, for Komer's

Lake notes that during the early phase of the Rhodesian problem, Komer sometimes acted on proposals from the Bureau of African Affairs without obtaining higher authority from Rusk or one of the Under Secretaries, but President Johnson curbed this tendency towards unilateral action in early 1964.¹⁶

In between the advocates of a forthright approach to the Rhodesian problem and those who sought to marginalise them, were the Department of Commerce, the Treasury, and the Department of Defense. The Department of Commerce took the view that U.S. investment in, and trade with, southern Africa was important in terms of the balance of payments and should not, therefore, be jeopardised. There was no threat from African nations to boycott trade if the United States did not take stronger measures against the white regimes in southern Africa and it was argued that the only immediate threat to U.S. business interests was from the white regimes if the U.S. Government intervened against them too actively. The Treasury concurred with this analysis and also wanted to prevent any policy that might damage relations with South Africa and disrupt its role in the supply of gold to the international monetary system.¹⁷ The Defense Department wanted to protect advantages that the U.S. military enjoyed in South Africa, and to maintain good relations with Portugal to avoid jeopardising its use of the strategically significant Azores base. NASA also opposed any policy that might threaten its tracking station in South Africa. Lake observes that:

views on aid policy. For Komer's advocacy of a more interventionist policy to prevent UDI, see Komer to Johnson, 29 September 1965, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1964-68*, Vol. XXIV, *Africa* [hereafter *FRUS*], (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office for the Department of State, 1999), p. 807.

¹⁶ Lake, *The 'Tar Baby' Option*, p. 67.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

These agencies had a far less important stake in Rhodesia, however, than they did in South Africa. While they therefore often found themselves at loggerheads with the State Department's African bureau over American policy toward the latter, they did not weigh in so heavily on the American response to UDI.¹⁸

Nevertheless, with so many different departments and agencies protecting or advancing their interests, the chances that Williams and the Bureau of African Affairs would prevail in the contest to shape U.S. policy on Rhodesia were much diminished. A major consequence of the bureaucratic conflict was that U.S. policy was slow to emerge. Williams explained this not in terms of delays resulting from 'vertical clearance' (the need for approval from higher authority) but rather as a problem of 'horizontal clearance'; i.e., delays resulting from co-ordination of policy *within* the State Department and *between* the State Department and other government departments.¹⁹ This can be demonstrated by an examination of the issues involved in U.S. policy and contingency planning prior to Rhodesia's UDI.

Bureaucratic conflict and the making of U.S. Rhodesia policy, 1964-65

During 1964 and 1965 the Johnson administration gave consideration to two related issues, both of which caused considerable conflict within the bureaucracy. The first was what kind of support the United States could give to Britain's efforts to deter Rhodesia from a UDI; the second was what action the United States could take to protect Zambian

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 68-69.

¹⁹ Williams, *Africa for the Africans*, pp. 164-65.

copper production in the event of economic warfare between Rhodesia and Zambia after a UDI occurred. The bureaucratic conflict intensified in the wake of UDI, but the influence of G. Mennen Williams and the Bureau of African Affairs diminished rapidly after George Ball took steps to gain control of the policy process.

The question of support for Britain

Throughout 1965 the State Department and the National Security Council kept a watchful eye on developments in Rhodesia, and its negotiations with Britain. The NSC and Bureau of African Affairs argued that the U.S. Government could have strengthened its support of the British Government by exerting greater diplomatic pressure on Rhodesia. There is evidence, however, that their efforts were weakened by a failure to coordinate their recommendations. This allowed George Ball, who was critical and suspicious of Britain's handling of the Rhodesian crisis, to avoid greater U.S. involvement.

By April 1965, NSC staffers were becoming increasingly concerned about developments in Rhodesia, and were trying to develop an interventionist strategy. A junior analyst on the NSC staff, Rick Haynes, pointed out to Robert Komer that there had been no '*direct, high level*' U.S. approach to the Rhodesian Government. Haynes suggested that Averell Harriman was ideally suited to such a mission because he was 'awfully good at scolding wayward Chiefs of State as a result of his acknowledged, world-wide reputation as an elder statesman.' Haynes also observed, 'such a trip could be attributed to *the President's*

*desire to strengthen the peace-keeping aspect of US foreign policy.*²⁰ Komer took up the proposal with Williams:

‘Soapy’, its becoming more and more apparent that our position on the Rhodesian problem is (a) gaining us no friends in independent Africa and (b) doing nothing to discourage or delay UDI. Granted, the U.S. has little leverage in this situation. However, it seems to me we’re not using what leverage we do have to best advantage.²¹

Komer suggested that if Harriman visited Salisbury after the Rhodesian elections on May 7, 1965 it could gain the United States ‘brownie points’ with the Africans and might dampen the enthusiasm of the Rhodesian Government for a UDI.²² It is not clear from the archives what happened to the NSC proposal for a troubleshooting visit, but the Bureau of African Affairs may have sidelined the initiative during its preparations for the African Chiefs of Mission Conference convened to consider a ‘New Policy For Africa.’²³ The NSC staff were also concerned that the Bureau of African Affairs was suffering from

²⁰ LBJL: NSF, Files of Edward K. Hamilton, Box 3, Memorandum, Haynes to Komer, 19 April 1965. Emphasis in the original.

²¹ LBJL: NSF, Files of Edward K. Hamilton, Box 3, Memorandum, Komer to Williams, 28 April 1965.

²² Ibid.

²³ Williams carried out the review at Johnson’s request. BHL: Williams Papers, State Department Files, Microfilm Edition, Series I, ‘Correspondence’, Reel 4, Henry Tasca, Acting Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, to Senator Long, 27 May 1965. Haynes considered the review a qualified success. He noted that it provided a feel for the political and economic climate in African states and broke down the parochialism of many U.S. Ambassadors who tended to see U.S. foreign policy only in terms of their countries of assignment. However, the conferences did not generate significant new ideas. LBJL: NSF, Files of Ulric Haynes, Box 1, Memorandum, Haynes to Bundy, 5 June 1965.

inertia as a result of Williams' recent extended absences to make speeches. In June, Haynes advised Bundy that he had met with one of the President's special assistants, Bill Moyers, to obtain Johnson's thinking on African affairs. Haynes reported that:

Bill urged that we light the fires under AF [Bureau of African Affairs] to get them to move forward with more preventive diplomacy to avert crises. He advised that where State seems to be falling short in protecting and advancing the President's interests in Africa, the NSC staff should not be reluctant to take the initiative.²⁴

However, the criticism levelled at Williams was unfair, as he was at this time extremely active on African policy and Rhodesia. In June 1965 Williams put forward a very convincing rationale for a presidential visit to Africa. He argued that such a visit would counter African (and African-American) perceptions that the United States accorded a low priority to African affairs, and establish a level of trust that could allow the State Department to develop understanding and support for specific policies. Since the President bore ultimate responsibility for foreign affairs, he could, Williams suggested, be very persuasive in explaining and obtaining support for U.S. foreign policy. Williams also observed, 'The image of this administration, as distinct from its predecessor, is still unclear in Africa.' A presidential visit would demonstrate to Africans Johnson's personal impact on domestic policy in the U.S., especially his dynamic projection of the 'Great Society' and his struggle for civil rights. It would also reciprocate the many visits of

²⁴ LBJL: NSF, Files of Ulric Haynes, Box 1, Memorandum, Haynes to Bundy, 15 June 1965.

African heads of state to Washington, and undermine Communist claims that only they were really interested in Africa.²⁵

Williams was also central to the exposition of U.S. policy on the Rhodesian problem. On the same day that Haynes wrote to Bundy about inertia in the Bureau of African Affairs, Williams gave a speech entitled 'Southern Rhodesia Today,' in which he stated unequivocally the U.S. position:

Let me make our position crystal clear, so there will be no misunderstanding. The United States will support the British Government to the fullest extent, if asked to do so, in its efforts to reach a solution of the Southern Rhodesian problem. We would also support the British Government to the fullest extent, in case of a unilateral declaration of independence in Southern Rhodesia.²⁶

Williams was therefore working just as hard as the NSC to convince senior government figures that the United States should be playing a more active role in African affairs, though his approach was not coordinated with the NSC. As the Rhodesian Crisis became more acute, the NSC became disillusioned with the tactics that it thought the Bureau of African Affairs was using to advance its position.

²⁵ BHL: Williams Papers, State Department Files, Microfilm Edition, Series I, 'Correspondence', Reel 4, Memorandum, 'Presidential Visit to Africa', 11 June 1965.

²⁶ BHL: Williams Papers, State Department Files, Microfilm Edition, Series I, 'Correspondence', Reel 5, 'Speech to the Chicago Chapter of the American Federal Bar Association', 15 June 1965, p. 6.

By October 1965, the NSC and the Bureau of African Affairs were clearly convinced that the British Government should adopt an effective deterrent strategy in its negotiations with the Rhodesian Government. They struggled, however, to convince George Ball that the U.S. Government should apply diplomatic pressure both privately and publicly in support of that strategy. Ball was resistant to deeper involvement in the crisis and told Bundy that the U.S. position should be to follow the British lead, so that if there was a 'blowup' the British would not be able to blame the U.S. Government.²⁷ Ball told Fredericks and other officials that a UDI was inevitable and suggested that the United States had 'nothing to worry about.' Both the NSC and the Bureau of African Affairs were alarmed by this complacency. They wanted the public release of a private statement that the U.S. Government had sent to the Rhodesian Government warning against a UDI, and exerted pressure on Ball to refer the matter to Rusk.²⁸ The Secretary of State refused to clear the statement, but this was by no means the end of the matter. The next day, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* ran an article on Rhodesia reporting the 'deep division of sentiment within the Johnson Administration' and that Ball had blocked expressions of U.S. support for the British position and for economic sanctions. The NSC staff thought that the leak came from the Bureau of African Affairs. Komer sent a copy of the article to Bundy with a note, 'This is lousy and will do no one any good! I suspect some AF [Bureau of African Affairs] hands!'²⁹ Komer's suspicions about the origin of the leak are logical enough, since it suggested a straightforward attempt by the Bureau of African

²⁷ Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, 5 October 1965, *FRUS*, p. 816.

²⁸ LBJL: NSF, Rhodesia Country File, Box 97, 'Memos and Misc., 12/63-1/66', Memorandum, Haynes to Komer, 19 October 1965; also *FRUS*, p. 827.

²⁹ LBJL: NSF, Rhodesia Country File, Box 97, 'Memos and Misc., 12/63-1/66', Memorandum, Haynes to Komer, and Komer to Bundy, 2 November 1965. This incident is also cited in Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, p. 195.

Affairs to undermine the position of its opponents, which is ‘a standard bureaucratic maneuver.’³⁰ However, press leaks can be used very subtly and it is worth considering what George Reedy has described as the ‘reverse-thrust technique.’³¹ In this case, as the story undermined rather than enhanced the position of the Bureau of African Affairs, it is possible that the leak came from Williams’ opponents. Ultimately, however, the leak’s origin is not as significant as the fact that it demonstrates the methods used by factions within the bureaucracy to advance their policy positions.

The question of support for Zambia

As noted in the previous chapter, Zambian copper production was a key interest for the United States.³² Once the proposal to construct a railroad that would bypass Rhodesia and reroute Zambian trade through Tanzania began to work its way round the U.S. Government, the usual clash of interests rapidly emerged. In a brief to Thomas Mann, the Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs, Williams explained that the Bureau of African Affairs regarded Zambia as the keystone in a ‘Zone of Peace’ along the frontiers of the ‘white redoubt’ in southern Africa, which could be imperilled by Rhodesian economic warfare against Zambia in the event of a UDI.³³ Williams acknowledged that the proposed Tanzania-Zambia rail link could not be completed in less than five years and

³⁰ Morton Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institute, 1974), p. 173.

³¹ G. Reedy, *The Twilight of the Presidency* (New York: World Publishing Company, 1970), pp. 90-91. Quoted in Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, p. 179.

³² See above, Ch. 6, pp. 316-17.

³³ BHL: Williams Papers, State Department Files, Microfilm Edition, Series I, ‘Correspondence’, Reel 4, Memorandum, Williams to Mann, 6 May 1965.

therefore could not provide a solution to the Zambian transportation problem during a period of confrontation with Rhodesia.³⁴ However, Williams was still in favour of the project on the basis that:

[It] may still be regarded as a psychological safety valve by which to moderate Zambian reactions to a Rhodesian UDI ... Zambia could more rationally withhold any action against Rhodesia if morally and emotionally sustained by the belief that the action could be taken more effectively in a number of years when the link was completed. Thus the maintenance of a receptive and helpful position by the United States toward the complicated rail link ... is regarded as an important part of whatever temporizing influence we can exert on the situation.³⁵

The debate about the value of the Tanzania-Zambia rail link became complicated when Kenneth Kaunda, the Zambian President, informed Williams that the Chinese Government was going to offer to build it. Ball, Rusk, and Johnson, dismissed this as nonsense.³⁶ They were probably influenced by the most recent National Intelligence Estimate on sub-Saharan Africa, which had concluded that although Communists would be presented with new opportunities to expand their influence in sub-Saharan Africa, 'even the militant radicals prize their freedom of movement, and we consider it unlikely that any African country will become a full-fledged Communist state, or will reject all

³⁴ The rail link (which was built with Chinese, not Anglo-American aid) actually took eight years to build. The UDI period lasted until 1980, but it is doubtful that this could have been foreseen by anyone in 1965.

³⁵ BHL: Williams Papers, State Department Files, Microfilm Edition, Series I, 'Correspondence', Reel 4, Memorandum, Williams to Mann, 6 May 1965, p. 2.

³⁶ Memorandum, Komer to Bundy, 28 May 1965, *FRUS*, pp. 798-99.

ties with the West.’³⁷ However, the Bureau of African Affairs sharply rejected this complacency at the apex of U.S. policymaking. Williams went head-to-head with Ball, arguing that potential Chinese involvement in the Tanzania-Zambia rail link ‘represents the most serious and dangerous Chinese thrust into Africa to date.’³⁸ Williams pointed out that acceptance of the Chinese offer to build half the link would give the Chinese a bridgehead in Africa that would greatly facilitate support of the Congo rebels. Also, failure to offer Western assistance would undercut President Kenneth Kaunda’s strategy of combating radical pressure on Zambia and Tanzania to take hostile action against the ‘white redoubt.’ That could increase the likelihood of a racial war in southern Africa, ‘heavily stacked in favor of the Chinese Communists and permitting full exploitation of their racial and violent revolutionary themes.’³⁹ Williams acknowledged that the rail link would be expensive (estimates varied between \$400 and \$500 million) but argued that inaction could be even more costly in the longer term. The potential financial and military risks for the United States included combating a reinvigorated rebel movement in the Congo, helping to offset the United Kingdom’s losses as a result of the cessation of Zambian copper production, and dealing with an increasingly violent racial confrontation in southern Africa that would be exploited by the Communists.⁴⁰ Accordingly, Williams suggested that in order to avoid these risks the U.S. Government should offer to finance a survey of the rail link and form an international consortium for its construction.⁴¹

³⁷ LBJL: NSF, National Intelligence Estimates, Box 8, ‘Problems and Prospects in Sub-Saharan Africa’, NIE Number 60/70-65, 22 April 1965.

³⁸ BHL: Williams Papers, State Department Files, Microfilm Edition, Series I, ‘Correspondence’, Reel 4, Memorandum, Williams to Ball, 8 June 1965, p. 1.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Elsewhere in the bureaucracy there was some limited recognition of the Chinese threat, but no commitment to the Tanzania-Zambia railroad project. In July 1965, the NSC staff advised the President that the Chinese had indeed offered to survey the rail link and possibly build the Tanzanian segment. They noted that although the cost of building a railroad might have been exaggerated, a highway project would still be a better option for a number of reasons. First, construction of a railroad would take many years, by which time the Rhodesian threat might have receded and the railroad would therefore be a multi-million dollar 'white elephant.' Second, the fact that Zambia and Southern Rhodesia jointly owned the existing rail route discouraged them 'from taking precipitous vindictive action against the other.'⁴² And third, it was not clear that the Chinese possessed the financial resources for a large-scale construction effort. Nevertheless, the President was advised 'this whole problem bears close watching, since a major Chicom bridgehead in East Africa could be highly painful.'⁴³ It is evident that for the NSC, the idea that the Chinese might become involved could not be dismissed as easily as Ball, Rusk, and Johnson had suggested. The debate over the Tanzania-Zambia railroad project illustrates the relative priority attached to African policy by the different elements within the U.S. bureaucracy. It gives a clear indication of the strategic thought within the Bureau of African Affairs and the NSC, which differed to varying degrees with the sanguine assessment of senior policymakers. Ball, Rusk, and Johnson saw little direct threat to U.S. interests, and they demonstrated a clear preference for limited liability in funding support of U.S. policy objectives.

⁴² Memorandum, Komer and Haynes to the President, 12 July 1965, *FRUS*, pp. 800-01.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

After UDI

Once the Rhodesian government declared its independence unilaterally, it pushed to the foreground questions about what economic sanctions the United States intended to impose upon the illegal regime, and what support would be given to Zambia. These issues threatened to spill over into other aspects of U.S. policy in southern Africa, as Thomas J. Noer has observed: ‘Ball quickly recognized that the African Bureau and its supporters planned to try to use the Rhodesian crisis to implement all of the rejected options they had pushed for in the other areas of white rule.’⁴⁴ In order to prevent this Ball sought to gain control of the decision-making process by appointing someone to take responsibility for U.S. policy on Rhodesia. Ball’s first choice was U. Alexis Johnson, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, but he declined. He then approached Roswell Gilpatric, who had been Assistant Secretary of State for Defense under Kennedy. This time, however, the President vetoed the appointment because of possible Congressional objections, and perhaps also for personal reasons.⁴⁵ Ball and Bundy next turned to William D. Rogers, a former Attorney General, whom they both knew and whom the President approved. According to Anthony Lake, Rogers was left in no doubt that the Bureau of African Affairs and its supporters ‘were trying to push a harder policy than Ball wanted’ and that it would be his job to act as ‘Ball’s lid on the rest of the

⁴⁴ Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, p. 198.

⁴⁵ Johnson told Rusk: ‘I don’t want this fella in my administration in any capacity and I’ve made it abundantly clear to McNamara and to Bundy time and time and time again, and I don’t want people shovin’ me on it ... They all tried to shove him in as CIA Director and they’ve been bitchin’ with me ever since because I didn’t name him.’ LBJL: White House Telephone Conversations, WH6511.09, Lyndon B. Johnson and Dean Rusk, 29 November 1965. This was the only intervention that Johnson made in the management of the Rhodesian problem.

bureaucracy.’⁴⁶ In a recent work, however, Andrew DeRoche rejects this ‘conspiratorial’ interpretation of Ball’s actions and suggests that Ball was not plotting to advance his ‘Europeanist’ agenda at the expense of the more progressive ‘Africanists’ in the administration.⁴⁷ DeRoche argues that:

The implication of Lake’s account is that Ball was a racist who did not care about the plight of blacks in Southern Rhodesia. The reality, however, was that Ball focused almost exclusively on the economic ramifications of UDI, particularly regarding Zambian copper.⁴⁸

DeRoche contends that Ball was concerned about the best interests of the black majorities in Zambia and Southern Africa, that he did listen to the views of African-Americans, and that G. Mennen Williams himself did not pigeonhole Ball as a ‘Europeanist.’⁴⁹ One need not engage the question of whether Ball was a racist, although ‘the personal experiences, intellectual baggage, and psychological needs’ of policymakers may be significant determinants of the positions they take on any given issue.⁵⁰ Rather, the significant fact is that Ball and Williams had different views of the best way to protect the national interest. Whereas Ball advocated limited liability, Williams was more inclined towards a fuller economic and political commitment in Africa.

⁴⁶ Lake, *The ‘Tar Baby’ Option*, p. 82.

⁴⁷ DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome*, p. 122.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

⁴⁹ John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, Oral History Interview Transcript, G. Mennen Williams, pp. 56-57. Cited in DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome*, p. 123.

⁵⁰ Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, p. 16.

Neither welcome nor effective: explaining the limited influence of G. Mennen Williams and the Bureau of African Affairs

There are several reasons – objective and subjective – why Williams was on the losing side of the bureaucratic battle over policy towards Rhodesia. In his memoirs, Dean Rusk commented:

Soapy Williams was one of the best Assistant Secretaries for African Affairs this country ever had. He was hardworking, knowledgeable, loyal, and always considerate, but we disagreed on the role the United States should play in Africa. Naturally he wanted us to put our best foot forward in Africa and send more foreign aid. But we were pinched for funds, and his position did not prevail.⁵¹

Rusk's emphasis on the limited availability of funds to support a more active U.S. policy in Africa partly explains why the views of Williams and the Bureau of African Affairs did not prevail. In 1962, Agency for International Development funds stood at \$312 million, but declined to \$261 million in 1963 and \$202 million in 1964.⁵² Against this background it is not surprising that Williams failed to secure American involvement in building the Tanzania-Zambia railroad. However, it is necessary to go beyond objective factors such as finance. As J. Garry Clifford has commented: 'In its emphasis on individual values and tugging and hauling by key players, bureaucratic politics makes

⁵¹ D. Rusk, *As I Saw It* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1990), p. 274.

⁵² DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome*, p. 97.

personality and cognitive processes crucial to understanding who wins and why.⁵³ A variety of factors determine the degree of influence exerted by policymakers, including: temperament; bureaucratic skill; ability to mobilise outside support; and, most importantly, relations with the President.⁵⁴

When asked by a former colleague in the State Department to identify the quality that was essential in an effective Secretary of State, Dean Acheson is said to have replied without hesitation: 'The killer instinct.'⁵⁵ Acheson was referring not to the Secretary of State's dealings with foreign governments, but to his relationship with other officials. Waldemar Nielsen has commented that Williams was not temperamentally suited to the bureaucratic policy process, which consequently diminished his influence: 'Assistant Secretary Williams, who swung an effective broadsword in the area of general salesmanship and political speech-making, had neither the taste nor the talent for the fine épée work required in day-to-day internal staff debate.'⁵⁶ According to Anthony Lake, although Wayne Fredericks exhibited greater persistence than Williams, his effectiveness was undermined by the fact that he had 'gained a reputation for committing one of the most terrible bureaucratic gaffes: He made no secret of his beliefs, and treated foreign policy problems as something more than technical issues.'⁵⁷ Perhaps, therefore, the overt policy emphasis in the Bureau of African Affairs on principles of racial equality and democracy tended to run against the culture of the State Department.

⁵³ Clifford, 'Bureaucratic Politics', p. 150.

⁵⁴ Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, pp. 219-32.

⁵⁵ Joseph Kraft, *Profiles in Power: A Washington Insight* (New York: New American Library, 1966), p. 178. Quoted in Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, p. 222.

⁵⁶ W. Nielsen, *The Great Powers and Africa* (New York: Praeger, 1969), p. 293.

⁵⁷ Lake, *The 'Tar Baby' Option*, p. 65.

Influence is also determined by the range of skills wielded by the bureaucrat, which includes the ability to write concise, persuasive briefs. Williams was adept at making his case on paper, as shown by his contribution to the debate over U.S. involvement in the Tanzania-Zambia railroad project, and his forceful advocacy of a presidential visit to Africa. In other respects, however, Williams was less effective. A crucial skill that Williams lacked or neglected is ‘knowing whom to call in a particular agency, because that individual is likely to favor what one wants done and can exert the necessary influence.’⁵⁸ The documentary evidence suggests that Williams failed to coordinate his policy initiatives sufficiently closely with the staff on the NSC and other sections of the bureaucracy sympathetic to the position of the Bureau of African Affairs. Indeed, NSC staff formed the impression that Williams was inactive, even though he was in fact consistently engaged with major issues such as the Rhodesian problem.

Morton Halperin, a prominent bureaucratic politics theorist, has noted: ‘A major form of influence within the bureaucracy is the ability to mobilize the support of influential groups outside the executive branch.’⁵⁹ Among the most significant groups are leading congressmen and senators and interest groups whose support the President needs. Nielsen has commented that Williams ‘became the target of a sustained barrage of criticism by Republicans in Congress, much of the press, and certain influential Democrats outside the Administration.’⁶⁰ This was no doubt due to the sensitive correlation between U.S. policy towards southern Africa and the domestic civil rights

⁵⁸ Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, p. 228.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

⁶⁰ Nielsen, *The Great Powers and Africa*, p. 293.

issue in the 1960s. The Bureau of African Affairs was conscious of and sympathetic to the activities of pressure groups such as the American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa (ANLCA). In June 1963, Williams encouraged Rusk to address an ANLCA-sponsored dinner in New York, arguing that it would 'lend renewed dignity to the efforts of both white and black groups to focus on national issues on which all can cooperate.'⁶¹ However, Williams' advocacy on behalf of the ANLCA brought him no additional influence within the administration because the President and senior advisers were hostile towards the development of a distinct African-American voice in U.S. foreign policy.⁶² Similarly, the fact that Williams cultivated close links with Senator Robert Kennedy was unhelpful to Williams because of the open antipathy between Kennedy and Johnson.⁶³

Halperin has acknowledged: 'The single most important determinant of the influence of any senior official is his relationship with the President.'⁶⁴ Williams acknowledged this fact when he recalled: 'We had to go to the top many times ... Some of them we won, some of them we lost.'⁶⁵ The most significant reasons for the limited influence of the Bureau of African Affairs is that other factions in the bureaucracy exacerbated and

⁶¹ BHL: Williams Papers, State Department Files, Microfilm Edition, Series I, 'Correspondence', Reel 5, Williams to Rusk, 7 June 1963. On that occasion Rusk declined, but he did address the organisation in September 1964, as noted below.

⁶² See below, pp. 385-87.

⁶³ Williams sent Kennedy regular briefings on African affairs. BHL: Williams Papers, State Department Files, Microfilm Edition, Series I, 'Correspondence', Reel 5. For the conflict between Kennedy and Johnson, see J. Shesol, *Mutual Contempt. Lyndon Johnson, Robert Kennedy, and the Feud That Defined a Decade* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1997).

⁶⁴ Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, p. 219.

⁶⁵ LBJL: Oral History Interview Transcript, G. Mennen Williams, 8 March 1974, p. 17.

exploited the weak personal relationship between Williams and Johnson, which had been clouded as a result of events at the 1960 Democratic Convention in Los Angeles. Williams and the liberal wing of the Democratic Party were not sympathetic to Johnson running with John F. Kennedy because they felt (mistakenly, as it turned out) that Johnson was weak on civil rights. Robert Kennedy told Johnson that JFK wanted him on the ticket but warned him ‘Mennen Williams will raise hell,’ to which Johnson responded: ‘Piss on Mennen Williams!’⁶⁶ Johnson was well known for his tendency to lash out when he felt injured, so the sentiment behind such language was probably not reserved for Williams. On the other hand, Williams’s outspoken opposition to Johnson in 1960 was a significant matter in Democratic Party politics. Helen Berthelot, Williams’s campaign manager, has suggested it probably had a lasting impact:

A picture which was to cloud Mennen’s political future for many years was on the front pages of the Detroit papers and appeared in many magazine reports of the convention. It showed Mennen standing 6-feet-4 with his mouth wide open yelling ‘No!’⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Transcript of interview conducted by Harry Middleton and Robert Hardesty, 19 August 1969. Quoted in Michael Beschloss, *Reaching For Glory: Lyndon Johnson’s Secret White House Tapes 1964-1965* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), p. 442. Johnson, of course, put it somewhat differently in his memoirs: ‘I told Bobby that I appreciated his concern, but that his information did not greatly surprise me.’ *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency 1963-1969* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), p. 92.

⁶⁷ H. W. Berthelot, *Win Some Lose Some: G. Mennen Williams and the New Democrats* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), pp. 214-15. This incident is also described in Thomas J. Noer, ‘Phone Rage: LBJ, Averell Harriman, and G. Mennen Williams,’ *Passport: The Newsletter of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations*, Vol. 35, Issue 3 (December 2004), p. 42; and idem, *Soapy*, pp. v-vi.

Many in Washington assumed that when Johnson became President he would push Williams out of office, but surprisingly he did not do so. Williams recalled that soon after he was sworn in, the new President called Williams in and told him: 'Now, Mennen, I want you to know that you're going to be as welcome and as effective in the White House as you had been with Kennedy.'⁶⁸ Johnson reassured Williams: 'We've pulled down the curtain on Los Angeles that night. We're a team.'⁶⁹ However, other members of the administration quickly demolished the bridges that Johnson had built, publicly undermining Williams's position. When Averell Harriman was appointed ambassador at large in April 1964, with special responsibility for Africa, he gave the press the impression that Williams had been demoted. Johnson was outraged by Harriman's comments and ordered Press Secretary George Reedy to counter the humiliation that had been inflicted on Williams. Johnson also ordered Rusk to tell Harriman to put the press straight and apologise to Williams. However, as Thomas J. Noer has commented: 'Despite Johnson's public relations efforts, the damage had been done. The Harriman appointment began a gradual erosion of Williams' direct influence on diplomacy and foiled his attempts to make Africa a major priority in U.S. foreign policy.'⁷⁰

Perceptions in Washington of the personal relationship between Williams and Johnson offer a convincing reason why Williams's influence diminished once Johnson became President. This was compounded by the President's lack of interest in African affairs, which was publicly known. When an article about this appeared in the *Washington Post*

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 20-21.

⁶⁹ LBJL: White House Telephone Conversations, K6312.01, Lyndon B. Johnson and G. Mennen Williams, 2 December 1964. Quoted in Noer, 'Phone Rage,' *Passport*, p. 42, and idem, *Soapy*, p. 275.

⁷⁰ Noer, "Phone Rage," *Passport*, p. 43. See also idem, *Soapy*, pp. 278-80.

on April 4, 1965 Haynes wrote to Komer: ‘As for “Soapy”, it only serves to compound his already precarious position.’⁷¹ Against this background, and with a following in Michigan impatient for his return to state politics, it is not surprising that Williams resigned from the Johnson administration in March 1966.⁷² Ironically, two months later Johnson made his only presidential speech on African affairs. On May 26, 1966 he told the ambassadors of the Organisation of African Unity that the United States was with them ‘heart and soul’ as they struggled to establish racial equality, and he criticised the racial policies of the illegal Rhodesian regime. Johnson made the speech partly to gain favour with African states and civil rights groups in the United States, but it chiefly reflected his concern to deflect attention from Robert Kennedy’s forthcoming visit to Africa.⁷³ Johnson’s short-term politicking contrasted sharply with the strategic and principled thinking that Williams had demonstrated whilst he was in office and which he highlighted in his memoirs. Reflecting on his time in office, he wrote that the national interest was a reasonable basis on which to formulate foreign policy but it sometimes obscured ‘the equally honest motivation of a desire to help fellow human beings who need help, and to make a better world.’⁷⁴ In the case of Rhodesia, however, the weight of

⁷¹ LBJL: NSF, Files of Ulric Haynes, Box 1, Memorandum, Haynes to Komer, 5 April 1965. The review of African policy undertaken in May 1965 was probably more of an attempt to correct the President’s negative image than a means to end speculation about Williams’ position.

⁷² One Williams campaigner wrote: ‘We wanted him back in Michigan long before he actually returned. I don’t think his disappointments with Johnson had much to do with his resigning. He wanted to be a Senator.’ Judge Avern Cohn to author, 16 July, 2004. See Noer, *Soapy*, Chapter VII, ‘From Washington to Michigan to Manila. The Johnson Years, Electoral Defeat, and Ambassador to the Philippines, 1964-69’, pp. 271-311.

⁷³ Lake, *The ‘Tar Baby’ Option*, p. 96; and Shesol, *Mutual Contempt*, pp. 300-01.

⁷⁴ Williams, *Africa for the Africans*, pp. 6-7.

the U.S. bureaucracy did not agree with his judgment that ‘what is morally right proves to be diplomatically right as well.’⁷⁵ Unfortunately for Williams, the notion of what was morally and diplomatically right for Rhodesia was also very vague in the minds of the U.S. public, even among those who took most interest in U.S. foreign policy and African affairs.

Pluralist influences and U.S. Rhodesian policy

According to the pluralist perspective, political power in liberal democracies like Britain and the United States is widely dispersed between large numbers of individuals and groups, both inside and outside government. Consequently, pluralists argue that there is no dominant class or group in society (which separates them from Marxists and elite theorists). Rather, they suggest that groups compete to advance their sectional interests, and new groups emerge to advance new interests if such interests cannot be articulated through existing groups.⁷⁶ ‘Thus a context is set for foreign policy making in which the executive is constantly aware of and responding to a range of interests and views.’⁷⁷ It has been suggested that in the United States the executive is particularly subject to pluralist pressures in foreign affairs, as Melvin Small has commented: ‘In few countries has public opinion played such a significant role in the development of diplomatic and

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 7.

⁷⁶ See, for example, Gabriel Almond, *The American People and Foreign Policy* (New York: Praeger, 1960); James Rosenau, *Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: An Operational Formulation* (New York: Random House, 1961); and James Barber, *Who Makes British Foreign Policy?* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1976).

⁷⁷ Barber, *Who Makes British Foreign Policy?*, p. 63.

military strategies as it has in the United States.’⁷⁸ However, the term ‘public opinion’ is by no means straightforward: it certainly does not imply all members of the public.⁷⁹ Public opinion might be conceived as a pyramid: at the apex is a small elite, consisting of respected national political figures and journalists, who often create public opinion; below that small segment of society is the attentive public, well-educated, well-informed, and potentially active in influencing the government and the wider public; finally, the vast majority of the public is often badly-informed and usually takes no interest in foreign affairs, unless there is a national crisis.⁸⁰ Small has observed that among the attentive public in the United States: ‘organized ethnic groups have exerted a major influence in national foreign policy debates. Ethnic political activism has been a unique problem for diplomats representing the multicultural United States.’⁸¹ In recent years a number of historians have examined the linkage between the domestic civil rights campaign and United States foreign policy towards southern Africa during the Cold War.⁸² As Mary

⁷⁸ Melvin Small, ‘Public Opinion’, in Hogan and Paterson (eds.), *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, p. 165.

⁷⁹ This has already been noted in relation to the discussion of the viability of British military intervention in Rhodesia. See above, Ch. 2, pp. 145-46.

⁸⁰ Small, ‘Public Opinion’, pp. 166-67. Almond identified four categories of ‘policy influencers’: political elites, who are elected to national public office or are party leaders; bureaucratic elites, who serve in the executive branch as a result of their expertise; communication elites, who own or control the mass media; and interest elites, who represent powerful private groups. *The American People and Foreign Policy*, p. 139.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 173-74.

⁸² Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American race relations in the global arena* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); and Michael L. Krenn,

Dudziak has noted, the problem of racism in the United States caused anxiety among Americans who asked themselves: ‘How could American democracy be a beacon during the Cold War, and a model for those struggling against Soviet oppression, if the United States itself practiced brutal discrimination against minorities within its own borders?’⁸³ Yet although U.S. domestic and foreign policies were often linked in the minds of policymakers and those who sought to influence them, the extent of American public interest in southern Africa during the 1960s should not be overstated for two major reasons. First, white liberals in the United States quickly became disillusioned with Africa as a result of the endemic corruption and one-party rule in many newly independent states on the continent. This also coincided with rising militancy in the domestic civil rights movement, which further alienated liberal white opinion.⁸⁴ It may be argued that the lack of congressional interest in the Rhodesian Crisis before UDI was symptomatic of the disillusion among white liberals, and after UDI the handful of legislators who did express an interest were mostly pro-Rhodesian.⁸⁵ Second, African-Americans considered racism in the United States and the struggle for civil rights to be more important than foreign affairs, and when domestic racism was linked to foreign

Black Diplomacy: African Americans and the State Department 1945-1969 (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1999).

⁸³ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, p. 3.

⁸⁴ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, pp. 181-82; and Terence Lyons, ‘Keeping Africa off the Agenda’, in Warren I. Cohen and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker (eds.), *Lyndon Johnson Confronts the World: American Foreign Policy 1963-1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 246.

⁸⁵ Raymond Arsenault, ‘White on Chrome: Southern Congressmen and Rhodesia, 1962-1971’, *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (Winter 1972), pp. 46-49.

affairs it was usually in the context of the Vietnam War.⁸⁶ It may also be argued that when interest groups did emerge to campaign on southern African issues they suffered from a number of specific weaknesses that inhibited their ability to influence U.S. policy towards the region, as the following discussion demonstrates.

In 1953 civil rights leaders, churchmen, and liberal Democrat politicians formed the American Committee on Africa (ACOA), which by 1965 had around 16,000 members.⁸⁷ According to its Executive Secretary, the white liberal George Houser, the ACOA was founded ‘to give active, tangible support to the liberation of Africa from colonialism, racism, and other social and political diseases of the same nature’.⁸⁸ The ACOA sought to discourage all cooperation – especially in the economic sphere – between the United States and the minority regimes in southern Africa, but particularly South Africa. It provided assistance to, and publicity for, African nationalists visiting the United States and United Nations to make speeches, and provided funds for the legal defence and welfare of political prisoners and their families.⁸⁹ The ACOA cooperated with civil rights groups, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In December 1957 they organised a ‘Day of Protest’ – led by Eleanor Roosevelt and Martin Luther King – to commemorate the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and to draw attention to the fact that the South African Government had

⁸⁶ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, pp. 188-89; Lake, *The ‘Tar Baby’ Option*, p. 72; and Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, p. 169.

⁸⁷ DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome*, p. 101; Lake, *The ‘Tar Baby’ Option*, pp. 70-71; and Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, p. 42.

⁸⁸ Quoted in Lake, *The ‘Tar Baby’ Option*, p. 71.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

refused to sign it.⁹⁰ In late 1961 the ACOA, together with other groups such as the NAACP, Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Urban League, and the National Conference of Negro Women, formed the American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa (ANLCA), which aimed to represent the various strands in African-American thinking about U.S. policy towards Africa.⁹¹ In the announcement for its first conference in November 1962, the founders of the ANLCA explicitly linked the domestic civil rights campaign with African issues:

We believe the 19 million American Negro citizens must assume a greater responsibility for the formation of United States policy in sub-Sahara Africa. Negroes are of necessity deeply concerned with developments in Africa because of the moral issues involved and because the struggle here at home to achieve in our time equality without respect to race or color is made easier to the extent that equality and freedom are achieved everywhere.⁹²

It was a measure of their initial success that the leaders of the ANLCA were able to meet with President Kennedy in late 1962, which was the first time African-Americans had gained access to the White House to discuss U.S. foreign policy.⁹³ In September 1964 Dean Rusk delivered a speech to the second meeting of the ANLCA in Washington. British officials in Washington advised the Foreign Office: ‘Mr. Rusk rarely delivers

⁹⁰ Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, p. 51.

⁹¹ DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome*, p. 101; and Lake, *The ‘Tar Baby’ Option*, p. 71.

⁹² Library of Congress: Papers of NAACP, Group III, Box A198, ANLCA, 1962 file, Letter of 21 August 1962. Quoted in Krenn, *Black Diplomacy*, p. 118.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

speeches about Africa and it is a measure of the importance of his audience that he did so on this occasion.⁹⁴ The Washington embassy was particularly conscious of the need to monitor the activities of the ANLCA at this time because Rhodesia was on the agenda and it featured in the resolutions of the meeting. First, the ANLCA urged the U.S. Government to affirm in the United Nations its opposition to Rhodesian independence until the African majority enjoyed full political participation on the basis of ‘one man, one vote’. Second, it expressed regret that the U.S. representative had abstained from the vote at the United Nations on the resolution calling upon the British Government to hold a constitutional conference. Third, it urged the U.S. Government to ‘lend its full weight to obtaining the release of political prisoners in Southern Rhodesia’. Finally, it condemned Ian Smith’s attempt to coerce the tribal chiefs into supporting his demand for immediate independence.⁹⁵ However, the resolution on Rhodesia – like the others passed by the second conference of the ANLCA – had little impact on U.S. policy, as DeRoche has commented: ‘While the ANLCA’s resolutions manifested the desire of African-American leaders that racial justice be extended to southern Africa, they basically failed to influence U.S. policy towards Southern Rhodesia in the fall of 1964.’⁹⁶ DeRoche does not explain why this was the case, but there are a number of sources that do provide answers to this question.

⁹⁴ The National Archives of the United Kingdom [hereafter, TNA]: Public Records Office, Kew [hereafter, PRO], FO 371/176519, J. E. Killick, British Embassy, Washington, to C. M. Le Quesne, West and Central Africa Department [hereafter WCAD], Foreign Office, 30 September 1964.

⁹⁵ BHL: Williams Papers, State Department Files, Microfilm Edition, Series V, ‘Miscellaneous’, Reel 23, ‘Resolutions of the American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa’, September 1964.

⁹⁶ DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome*, pp. 101-02.

The failure of interest groups such as the ACOA and the ANLCA to influence U.S. policy on southern African issues can be explained partly by their organisational and tactical weaknesses, and partly by attitudes towards African-Americans and African issues within the Johnson administration. With regard to tactics, Anthony Lake has observed that the ACOA had only a limited effect on American policy towards southern Africa 'because it focused, at least until the late 1960s, on New York and the United Nations rather than on Washington and the American government.'⁹⁷ Further, when the ACOA did campaign in Washington it targeted the Bureau of African Affairs, which was already sympathetic to its aims, rather than the sections of the Johnson administration that constrained the Africanists. Consequently, the ACOA 'irritated the Bureau by pestering it to push for actions which could not possibly be sold to the rest of the bureaucracy.'⁹⁸ Similarly, officials in the Bureau of African Affairs suggested that the ANLCA was 'a long way from being an effective organ for bringing pressure to bear on the U.S. Government', not least because its members had demonstrated a great deal of ignorance on African matters.⁹⁹ This evidence tends to support the conclusions of contemporary academic studies, which pointed to the socio-economic factors that militated against African-American knowledge about African affairs.¹⁰⁰ However, it may be argued that ignorance about the Rhodesian Crisis was not limited to African-Americans, as DeRoche has

⁹⁷ Lake, *The 'Tar Baby' Option*, p. 71.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ TNA: PRO, FO 371/176519, J. K. E. Broadley, British Embassy, Washington, to John Wilson, WCAD, Foreign Office, 12 October 1964.

¹⁰⁰ See, for example, John A. Davis, 'Black Americans and United States Policy Toward Africa', *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (1969), pp. 236-49; and Milton D. Morris, 'Black Americans and the Foreign Policy Process: The Case of Africa', *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (September 1972), pp. 451-63.

acknowledged: ‘In general, Southern Rhodesia did not capture the attention of the American public before UDI.’¹⁰¹ One student group at Princeton University found that there was so little news about Rhodesia in the United States – even though UDI was imminent – that it had to solicit information from a prominent British interest group.¹⁰² In addition to lack of information, the effectiveness of the ANLCA was further undermined by the fact that it had no permanent office, which resulted in administrative weakness, such as the failure to publish its conference resolutions.¹⁰³ Finally, as British officials noted, although African-American leaders had the ear of the White House on domestic civil rights issues, it was by no means clear that they enjoyed similar leverage on U.S. policy towards Africa.¹⁰⁴ The last point is probably the most significant, since there is considerable evidence that President Johnson, and many in his administration, were determined to prevent the development of a distinct African-American voice in U.S. foreign policy.

In December 1964 the ANLCA pressed the White House for a meeting with Johnson to discuss African policy. According to an NSC memorandum, Johnson made it clear: ‘He doesn’t think it at all a good idea to encourage a separate Negro view of foreign policy.’

¹⁰¹ DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome*, p. 101.

¹⁰² Rhodes House Library, Oxford: Papers of the Africa Bureau, MSS Afr. s1681, Box 258, File 10, David Wiley, Southern Africa Committee, National Student Christian Federation, Princeton University, to the Rhodesia Circle, Africa Bureau, London, 24 October 1965.

¹⁰³ TNA: PRO, FO 371/176519, J. K. E. Broadley, British Embassy, Washington, to John Wilson, WCAD, Foreign Office, 12 October 1964.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

We don't want an integrated domestic policy and a segregated foreign policy.'¹⁰⁵ The NSC suggested that as Rusk had a 'particularly high standing' with the ANLCA leaders he should try to deter them from pursuing a distinct African-American agenda on African affairs.¹⁰⁶ Rusk met with the ANLCA in March 1965. He did not state the administration's position as baldly as Johnson had privately, but rather stressed the problems associated with U.S. policy, such as its strategic interest in the Azores base, which made its dealings with Portugal on African matters somewhat delicate.¹⁰⁷ However, this more subtle approach did not have its intended effect. The NSC discovered shortly afterwards that the ANLCA intended to hold a meeting in order to create a permanent organisation for influencing U.S. foreign policy towards Africa, which Haynes saw as 'an attempt to organize an "ethnic lobby" out of a heretofore relatively ineffective and loosely constituted interest group.'¹⁰⁸ In order to remove the *raison d'être* of such an ethnic lobby, Haynes urged a high-level U.S. 'friendship tour' of African states, which would combat the impression that U.S. interest in Africa was only triggered during times of crisis.¹⁰⁹ Clifford Alexander, one of Johnson's special assistants, had similar concerns about the ANLCA, and suggested that the Bureau of African Affairs should 'not give as much time and attention to representatives of the Conference as they

¹⁰⁵ LBJL: NSF, Africa Country File, Box 76, Vol. II (7/64-6/65), 'Africa – General, Memos and Misc.' [1 of 2], Komer to Bundy, 6 January 1965. Quoted in Krenn, *Black Diplomacy*, p. 134; and Lyons, 'Keeping Africa off the Agenda', p. 272.

¹⁰⁶ LBJL: NSF, Africa Country File, Box 76, Vol. II (7/64-6/65), 'Africa – General, Memos and Misc.' [1 of 2], Bundy to Rusk, 7 January 1965. Quoted in Krenn, *Black Diplomacy*, p. 134.

¹⁰⁷ LBJL: NSF, Files of Ulric Haynes, Box 1, Memorandum, Haynes to Bundy, 4 March 1965.

¹⁰⁸ LBJL: NSF, Files of Ulric Haynes, Box 1, Memorandum, Haynes to Komer, 25 March 1965.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

have in the past'.¹¹⁰ Yet Haynes remained relatively relaxed about the ANLCA because he recognised that it lacked the organisational capabilities and financial resources to be effective. He also noted that other interest groups such as the ACOA and American Society for African Culture were 'anxious to sabotage the creation of an all-Negro lobby which might diminish their respective importance.'¹¹¹ Haynes concluded at the end of August 1965 that that the ANLCA 'has proven itself to be a loose conglomeration of disparate organizations which lacks the expertise and background to be of any real help to us in formulating African policy.'¹¹² Haynes suggested that Lee White, a civil rights adviser, should emphasise to the ANLCA leadership the importance of consulting with the State Department before taking public positions critical of U.S. policy, and should express the administration's hope that the ANLCA would be helpful on African matters.¹¹³ It may be argued that this clear desire within the Johnson administration to constrain the ANLCA during 1964 and 1965 was the most significant reason for its failure to influence U.S. policy towards southern Africa, which was compounded by organisational weaknesses in the ANLCA. Anthony Lake has commented: 'It was an important failure, for this was the only anti-apartheid group with a natural interest in Africa'.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ LBJL: NSF, Africa Country File, Box 76, Vol. II (7/64-6/65), 'Africa – General, Memos and Misc.' [1 of 2], Alexander to Bundy, [n.d.]. Quoted in Krenn, *Black Diplomacy*, p. 134.

¹¹¹ LBJL: NSF, Files of Ulric Haynes, Box 1, Memorandum, Haynes to Komer, 14 April 1965.

¹¹² LBJL: NSF, Files of Ulric Haynes, Box 1, Memorandum, Haynes to Lee C. White, 30 August 1965.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Lake, *The 'Tar Baby' Option*, pp. 71-72.

Conclusion

The Johnson administration's policy on Rhodesia can be seen as the result of compromise and conflict between different sections of the bureaucracy that competed to advance interpretations of how best to serve the national interest. There were sharp differences of opinion between policymakers on the degree of support to give Britain and Zambia as a consequence of Rhodesia's UDI, but ultimately the advocates of a minimalist strategy prevailed. Several factors explain why the views of the Bureau of African Affairs were marginalised, but most significant among these was the inability of G. Mennen Williams to exert sufficient leverage with President Johnson, partly as a result of a clouded personal history and partly because Johnson had little interest in African affairs. U.S. policy was also unaffected by interest groups concerned with southern Africa in general and Rhodesia in particular. Once again, the prevailing attitudes within the Johnson administration are crucial to understanding why pluralist influences were so limited. The bureaucratic politics and pluralist perspectives not only help to explain the process of policymaking in the Johnson administration, but also provide essential background for comprehending bilateral relations between the United States and Britain, which were explored in the preceding chapter.

Conclusion

The Rhodesian Crisis in British and International Politics

Reflections on the Rhodesian Crisis

It is fashionable for historians to claim that their research is relevant to current events, not least because the chances of securing funding may be much improved by an emphasis on the relationship between past and present. This thesis does not stress such claims, but it is reasonable to agree with Lord Owen's recent comment that the horrendous situation in Zimbabwe today cannot be understood without reference to its history.¹ It is also pertinent to wonder how the history of Zimbabwe would have turned out had there been no UDI, and to ask whether there was a realistic prospect that a UDI might have been averted. Owen suggested that if the Conservative Party had been returned to power in October 1964 a UDI would not have occurred because the Commonwealth Secretary, Duncan Sandys, was 'a very tough man'. Owen also observed that the Conservatives would have enjoyed the benefit of authority derived from continuity in office, which the Labour Government lacked.² On the other hand, it has been argued that relations between the Rhodesian Front and Labour were actually better than had been the case with the Conservatives, whom the Rhodesians perceived as too patrician.³ Another point that

¹ Lord Owen, Plenary Speech, Rhodesian UDI: 40 Years On Conference, London School of Economics and Political Science, 5 January 2006.

² Ibid.

³ Donal Lowry, 'Cold War, Culture and Self-Perception', Panel One: 'Rhodesian UDI: The Domestic Context', Rhodesian UDI: 40 Years On Conference, London School of Economics and Political Science, 5 January 2006.

militates against Owen's counterfactual proposition is the continuity in policy between the Conservative and Labour Governments. The historian Anthony Low has suggested in relation to decolonisation that Harold Wilson was a prisoner of Harold Macmillan's determination in the early 1960s to placate African opinion.⁴ Indeed, as Chapter One of this thesis has pointed out, whilst Wilson was Leader of the Opposition he entered into a number of explicit commitments to bring about African majority rule in Rhodesia, which certainly tends to justify Low's argument. Oliver Wright, who served as Wilson's Foreign Office Private Secretary, has also remarked specifically on the continuity in Rhodesian policy:

What was encouraging about it was that while Lord Home was trying to deal with the problem of Ian Smith at 10 Downing Street he was very concerned to keep the Labour Party on board so that it would be a national policy toward Rhodesia and not merely a Conservative one. Harold Wilson, when he took over at Number 10, continued this very much and tried to run Rhodesia keeping the Conservative Party on board.⁵

This 'national policy' had profound political consequences in the wake of UDI because it splintered the Conservative Party and contributed to the decisive Labour victory in the 1966 general election. Aside from these obvious political advantages a number of other

⁴ Anthony Low, 'The End of the British Empire in Africa', in P. Gifford & Wm. Roger Louis (eds.) *Decolonisation and African Independence: the Transfers of Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 64.

⁵ Churchill Archive Centre, Cambridge [hereafter CAC]: Diplomatic Oral History Programme [hereafter DOHP], GBR/0014/DOHP 17, Sir Oliver Wright, Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, 1964-66, Transcript of Interview, 18 September 1996, pp. 12-13.

factors may also explain the continuity in policy between the Conservatives and Labour. First, the resources available to consecutive governments do not differ significantly. When the Labour Government was elected in October 1964 it found that the balance of payments crisis limited its freedom of manoeuvre in foreign as well as domestic policy. Second, interest groups continually seek to influence government policy. During the Rhodesian Crisis there were groups on the left and right of the political spectrum that watched carefully to ensure that the British Government did not take action prejudicial to the interests of either the African nationalists or the Europeans in Rhodesia. Third, governments often inherit problems with certain options irrevocably ruled out. The Chiefs of Staff had consistently ruled out the use of force against Rhodesia since the early 1960s, which was a powerful constraint on government policy. Finally, the Civil Service is a permanent source of policy advice, which probably reinforced the continuity in Rhodesian policy between the Conservatives and Labour in 1964.⁶ As one Fabian Society tract acknowledged: 'There is the traditional suspicion widespread in the Labour party that it is the Foreign Office which diverts a Labour Government from pursuing a radical course in foreign policy.'⁷ From a slightly different perspective Lord Norton, a

⁶ This comment should be qualified with the observation that an incoming Labour administration is not permitted to have access to the political files of an outgoing Conservative administration, and vice versa. I am grateful to Dr N. J. Crowson for this information.

⁷ Rodney Fielding, *The Making of Labour's Foreign Policy* (London: Fabian Society, 1975) p. 5. This is known as the 'power-bloc' model of ministerial-civil servant relations. Sir Nicholas Henderson has also commented that: 'The Labour Government that came to power in 1964 were very (I think I may have reflected on this) very suspicious, not to say contemptuous, of officials. They thought officials were trying to oppose what they were doing.' CAC: DOHP, GBR/0014/DOHP 32, Sir Nicholas Henderson, Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1963-65, Transcript of Interview, 24 September 1998, pp. 4-5.

respected academic, commented: ‘Insofar as they [civil servants] consciously exert influence over ministerial decisions, they do so not in pursuit of a particular party bias but rather in furtherance of what they perceive to be some “national interest”, seeking to steer ministers toward what one permanent secretary referred to as “the common ground”.’⁸ Yet whatever reason best explains the continuity between the Conservatives and Labour, it does not mean that the Labour Government’s Rhodesian policy was the right approach, or that it was the only policy that it could have pursued.

Continuity is only one of the remarkable features of the Labour Government’s Rhodesian policy. Another is the extent to which the Prime Minister dominated the formulation and execution of that policy. Philip Ziegler, Wilson’s official biographer, has observed that it is common for British Prime Ministers to take an interventionist role in foreign affairs and suggests that from the beginning of his time in office Wilson never intended to take a back seat in dealing with international problems. In Ziegler’s opinion:

It can fairly be said that Wilson devoted a disproportionate part of his time and energies to a problem like Vietnam, in which the British interest was no more than peripheral. It is harder to criticise the time he devoted to Rhodesia, which was pre-eminently a British responsibility.⁹

⁸ Philip Norton, *The British Polity* (London: Longman, 2nd edn., 1990), p. 221.

⁹ Philip Ziegler, *Wilson: The Authorised Life of Lord Wilson of Rievaulx* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 219.

A month after UDI Richard Crossman estimated that half of Wilson's time was spent dealing with the Rhodesian Crisis.¹⁰ It is probable that Wilson devoted a similarly high proportion of his time to Rhodesia in the months preceding UDI. Was this, as Ziegler suggests, a justifiable preoccupation? Several factors may be adduced in support of his assessment. First, Wilson was the chief of a largely inexperienced Cabinet, and it might be argued that this compelled him to take a leading role in all manner of executive problems, including Rhodesia, which was multi-faceted and therefore could not be left entirely in the hands of the Commonwealth Relations Office. Second, during the early months of the Labour Government the position of Wilson's first Foreign Secretary, Patrick Gordon Walker, was compromised by the fact that he did not have a seat in the House of Commons, which immediately enhanced Wilson's role in foreign affairs. Third, Wilson's academic background (as an economist at Oxford) meant that he was theoretically well suited to comprehending the economic dimensions of the Rhodesian Crisis. On the other hand, it can equally be argued that Wilson's dominance had deleterious effects. First, it undermined the notion of collective Cabinet responsibility for Rhodesian policy, which other complications in the Government's affairs tended to reinforce. Marcia Williams, Wilson's political secretary, wrote in her memoirs that Rhodesia simply did not get the attention that it deserved before UDI because the Government was preoccupied with the economic crisis in Britain.¹¹ A second, and related point is that because there was little sense of collegiality, the direction of the

¹⁰ R. H. S. Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister. Volume 1: Minister of Housing, 1964-66* (London: Hamish Hamilton and Jonathan Cape, 1975), p. 407, entry for Thursday 9 December 1965. Crossman was also 'disconcerted' to find out that James Callaghan was spending around a third of his time dealing with Rhodesia (though it really should have been no surprise that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was so engaged with matters relating to economic sanctions).

¹¹ Marcia Williams, *Inside Number 10* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), p. 34.

Government's Rhodesian policy was not subject to proper scrutiny by the Cabinet. The result, in the words of Robert Good, the U.S. Ambassador to Zambia at the time of UDI, was a policy that 'placed Rhodesia's neighbour, Zambia, in mortal danger, came within an ace of destroying the multiracial Commonwealth, and promoted an unprecedented involvement of the United Nations in programmes of dubious effectiveness and therefore of questionable wisdom.'¹²

Good commented that after UDI, 'Wilson's reactions to his several "constituencies" produced a policy constantly working at cross-purposes',¹³ but this is equally true of the period preceding UDI, which can be demonstrated by analysing the effects of Wilson's decision to rule out the use of force. Wilson calculated that by excluding military action – not only in private but also in public – he would satisfy the first of his constituencies: British public opinion and the Conservative Party. However, this was either partially or entirely at cross-purposes with the other constituencies of which Wilson had to take account. In Rhodesia, Wilson hoped that his rejection of force would encourage the African nationalists to adopt a more realistic aim than immediate majority rule, but it is clear that he only succeeded in giving the Rhodesian Front the green light to proceed with a UDI. In the Commonwealth, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and a handful of African

¹² Robert C. Good, *UDI: The International Politics of the Rhodesian Rebellion* (London: Faber, 1973), p. 292.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 295. In an academic study written shortly after the publication of Good's book, Martin Mason also highlighted the contradictions in British policy. Britain's explicit aims of maintaining authority over Rhodesia, and discharging its responsibility to the African majority before relinquishing authority, were incompatible with the implicit aims of maintaining Britain's international prestige, and preserving its general economic interests. *Responsibility Without Power: Britain and Rhodesia Since 1965* (Ottawa, Carleton University, 1975), pp. 6-8.

moderates were relieved that the British Government did not intend to use troops to impose a solution in Rhodesia, but the majority of the Afro-Asian members suspected the British of connivance with their 'kith and kin'. Denis Greenhill, who went on to become Permanent Under Secretary in the Foreign Office within a few years of UDI, has suggested that Wilson 'was far too sensitive ... to the feelings of other Commonwealth countries and that made it very difficult to get a settlement really'.¹⁴ Yet this ignores the fact that Wilson not only felt a deep personal sense of attachment to the Commonwealth but also 'believed that it represented the surest way by which his country could remain among the foremost powers'.¹⁵ In the United Nations the Afro-Asians and the Soviet bloc also condemned Britain for its unwillingness to use force, pointing out that it was morally wrong to leave the African majority in Rhodesia under white oppression. However, arguments were also put forward suggesting that this created a situation in Rhodesia that constituted a regional threat to international peace and security within the meaning of Chapter VII of the UN Charter. The Labour Government found it necessary to go along with a programme of mandatory sanctions, which was entirely inconsistent with its concerns about creating a precedent that could be applied against South Africa. The fact that sanctions failed to work also exposed Britain to continuing criticism at the United Nations, as Lord Caradon, Britain's diplomatic representative in New York commented: 'the credit we had achieved and the merit we had achieved in the general membership was much reduced by our failure to cope with Rhodesia.'¹⁶ It is therefore a central contention of this thesis that although the Labour Government's decision not to

¹⁴ CAC: DOHP, GBR/0014/DOHP 3, Baron Greenhill of Harrow, Assistant Under Secretary of State, 1964-66, Transcript of Interview, 14 February 1996, p. 10.

¹⁵ Ziegler, *Wilson*, p. 219.

¹⁶ Rhodes House Library, Oxford: Oxford Colonial Records Project, MSS Brit. Emp. s395, Lord Caradon, Transcript of Interview, 23 April 1971, p. 29.

use force to impose a constitutional settlement in Rhodesia was politically safe in domestic terms, it represented a grave error of judgment in relation to Britain's international standing.

This thesis has also argued that the Labour Government's handling of the Rhodesian Crisis created difficulties in Britain's relations with its Old Commonwealth partners and the United States. It is clear from the evidence in The National Archives that the Government's contingency planning to deal with a UDI was compromised by a lack of momentum. This was a result of the tendency in the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee to defer crucial decisions pending an assessment of the circumstances that prevailed at the time of a UDI. The Old Commonwealth and the United States – who were resolved to do no more than follow Britain's lead in the event of a UDI – therefore could not formulate their own contingency plans, which left them feeling frustrated with, and even suspicious of, the British Government. Bureaucratic conflict between the Foreign Office and the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO), which revealed much confusion about the aims of the Government's Rhodesian policy, exacerbated this lamentable state of affairs. The CRO was chiefly responsible for the Government's contingency planning to deal with a UDI, but according to Denis Greenhill it was a 'superfluous Ministry' and a 'useless department'.¹⁷ Greenhill was of course a Foreign Office mandarin, so it is not surprising that he criticised the CRO in such unequivocal terms, but he was not the only one to do so. According to the Confederation of British Industry, the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, Arthur Bottomley, was 'of no quality whatsoever' and was 'hopelessly out of his depth', and his Permanent Under

¹⁷ CAC: DOHP, GBR/0014/DOHP 3, Baron Greenhill, Transcript of Interview, 14 February 1996, p. 9.

Secretary, Sir Saville Garner, was ‘a dead bloody loss’.¹⁸ Garner’s own memoirs acknowledge ‘a mood of disillusionment’ in the CRO, which reflected concerns about the future of the Department, and ‘a constant undercurrent of criticism’ in Parliament, the press, and other government departments.¹⁹ Low morale may have contributed to the CRO’s poor performance during Rhodesian Crisis, which was especially evident in its liaison role with the Old Commonwealth and the United States. In conclusion, it is clear that the weaknesses in the Labour Government’s administrative machinery compounded the confusion in its Rhodesian policy, which resulted not only in vociferous criticism of Britain by Afro-Asian states in the Commonwealth and the United Nations, but also in a loss of Britain’s prestige among its closest international partners.

Some thoughts on future research

This thesis has demonstrated that the Rhodesian Crisis was multi-faceted and enormously complex by analysing only its British, Commonwealth and American contexts. Further work is necessary on certain points associated with these contexts, and on other aspects of the Rhodesian Crisis that this thesis has not addressed (for reasons of space). As far as the British domestic context is concerned, more research is necessary on attitudes within the Parliamentary Labour Party and Labour constituencies. It would be helpful, for example, to evaluate Dr David Kerr’s claim that ‘Vietnam rather captured the left wing of the Labour Party, both inside and outside the House’, to the extent that it overshadowed

¹⁸ Peterhouse School Archives, Marondera, Zimbabwe: Papers of Sir Humphrey Gibbs, ‘Report on CBI Mission to Rhodesia, October 1965’, p. 13. Transcript of a recording by Eric Faulkner (who was a member of the mission). Quoted in Richard Coggins, ‘Rhodesian UDI and the search for a settlement, 1964-8: failure of decolonization’, Oxford D.Phil (2002), p. 75.

¹⁹ Joe Garner, *The Commonwealth Office 1925-1968* (London: Heinemann, 1978), pp. 365-69.

Rhodesia.²⁰ Yet there are some obstacles to this line of enquiry. First, the records in the National Museum of Labour History in Manchester are very patchy, at least in relation to the period before UDI.²¹ Second, it may be the case that the records of Labour constituencies do not provide much information about Rhodesia, either because the minutes of constituency meetings only briefly record decisions rather than full discussion, or because records have simply been lost or destroyed. Kees Maxey, a member of the Billericay Constituency Labour Party, which was very active during the Rhodesian Crisis,²² has suggested that the majority of constituencies with which he had any contact did not share the careful approach to record keeping practiced by the Billericay Constituency.²³ Similarly, very little is known about attitudes among Liberal MPs and Liberal constituencies towards the Labour Government's Rhodesian policy,²⁴ which may

²⁰ Dr David Kerr, MP for Wandsworth and Parliamentary Private Secretary, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 1967-69, in 'Rhodesian UDI', ICBH Witness Seminar, 6 September 2000, Session One Transcript, p. 26. <http://www.icbh.ac.uk/icbh/witness/rhodesia>

²¹ National Museum of Labour History, Manchester: Commonwealth Papers: Southern Rhodesia Correspondence (1961-1969) and Southern Rhodesia Documents (1963-1966).

²² The Billericay Constituency formed a Rhodesia study group, which wrote *Rhodesia: The background to the present conflict, and policy for the British Government* (Essex: Billericay Constituency Labour Party, September 1968). A copy is in the School of Oriental and African Studies: Archives of the Movement for Colonial Freedom, Box 60, COU 122 (b) Southern Rhodesia 1963-1972.

²³ Conversation with the author, Dr Michael Kandiah, and Dr Richard Coggins, London School of Economics and Political Science, 5 January 2006. Maxey is the author of *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe* (London: Fabian Society, 1972); and *The Fight For Zimbabwe. The Armed Conflict in Southern Rhodesia since UDI* (London: Rex Collins, 1975). His papers are deposited in Rhodes House Library, Oxford.

²⁴ There is some material dealing with Jo Grimond's views in the British Library of Political and Economic Science: Papers of Alastair Hetherington, Hetherington/10.

be considered a significant factor in relation to Labour's slim parliamentary majority between 1964 and 1966.

The international dimensions of the Rhodesian Crisis are the most neglected. This thesis has redressed the balance to some extent by exploring the Commonwealth context, especially the consultation and co-operation between Britain and its Old Commonwealth partners, which has been acknowledged as a new and important avenue of inquiry.²⁵ Relatively little attention has been paid to the United Nations dimension of the Rhodesian Crisis. Some studies have focused on Rhodesia's complicated status in international law,²⁶ and there was a steady stream of literature dealing with sanctions imposed after UDI.²⁷ This thesis has touched briefly upon British attitudes towards UN involvement in the Rhodesian Crisis, but it is also important to look at how the British Government managed the issue at the UN in the period before UDI. Britain relied heavily on its Old Commonwealth partners and the United States to prevent the Rhodesian Crisis from slipping out of its control in the General Assembly and the Security Council, but this gave

²⁵ Introductory comments by Professor Arne Westad, Chair, Panel Four, 'Rhodesian UDI: The International Context', Rhodesian UDI: 40 Years On Conference, London School of Economics and Political Science, 6 January 2006.

²⁶ For example, Claire Palley, *The Constitutional History and Law of Southern Rhodesia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966); J. Nkala, *The United Nations, international law and the Rhodesian independence crisis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); and V. Gowland-Debbas, *Collective responses to illegal acts in international law: United Nations action in the question of Southern Rhodesia* (London: Nijoff, 1990).

²⁷ See, for example: T. Curtin and D. Murray *Economic Sanctions and Rhodesia* (London: Institute of Economic Affairs, 1967); R. B. Sutcliffe, *Sanctions Against Rhodesia* (London: Africa Bureau, 1968); L. T. Kapungu *The U.N. and economic sanctions against Rhodesia* (Lexington: D. C. Heath, 1973); H. R. Strack, *Sanctions: the Case of Rhodesia* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1978); and M. Bailey, *Oilgate: The Sanctions Scandal* (London: Coronet Books, 1979).

rise to certain anomalies about which little has been written. For example, Canada and New Zealand saw the UN as a cornerstone of their external relations, but they were placed in the invidious position of supporting the British claim that Rhodesia did not fall within the UN's competence. The United States also found itself – not for the first or the last time – supporting British colonial policy despite its supposedly anti-imperial heritage. There is a great deal of material in British, Australian, Canadian, New Zealand, and American archives that will illuminate how the Rhodesian Crisis was managed in its UN context, and the consequences of this.

In terms of methodology, an interdisciplinary approach – which has so far been totally lacking – may lead to greater understanding of many aspects of the Rhodesian Crisis. Historians sometimes make excellent use of theory to frame their empirical research, but their efforts in this regard are usually limited to one or two theoretical paradigms. To give two examples: in his book *Dilemmas of Appeasement*, Gaines Post Jr. observed the consequences of bureaucratic politics in British foreign policy formulation during the 1930s and acknowledged the utility of deterrence theory for analytical purposes; and Louise Richardson's *When Allies Differ* examined Anglo-American relations during the Suez Crisis and Falklands War from the perspective of alliance theory.²⁸ However, the Rhodesian Crisis provides a single case study that can be analysed from *multiple* theoretical perspectives in political science and international relations. At the domestic level these include intra-executive relations, bureaucratic politics, executive-legislative relations, and a variety of pluralist perspectives dealing with the media, pressure groups

²⁸ Gaines Post Jr., *Dilemmas of Appeasement: British Deterrence and Defense, 1934-1937* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993). Louise Richardson, *When Allies Differ: Anglo-American Relations During the Suez and Falklands Crises* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).

and public opinion. At the international level there are many useful analytical perspectives and models for this study, such as the concept of crisis, theory and practice of negotiation, alliance theory, multilateral diplomacy, deterrence, and coercive diplomacy. Future research on the Rhodesian Crisis carried out from these theoretical perspectives would therefore be useful not only for scholars of British decolonisation and international history, but also political scientists interested in domestic aspects of foreign policy formulation, and international relations theorists concerned with the operation of the international states system.

Appendix

The Rhodesian Franchise¹

The franchise is for voters of all races registered on one of the two rolls and extends to all citizens aged 21 years or over, resident in the country for more than two years, subject to certain property, income or educational qualifications. The following are the qualifications required for each role.

‘A’ Roll

- (a) Income of £792 or ownership of property of value of £1,650, or
- (b) Income of £528 or ownership of property of value of £1,100 and completion of a course of primary education, or
- (c) Income of £330 or ownership of property of value of £550 and four years secondary education, or
- (d) Appointment to the office of Chief or Headman.

‘B’ Roll

- (a) Income of £264 or ownership of property of value of £495, or
- (b) Income of £132 or ownership of property of value of £275 and two years secondary education, or

¹ Source: London School of Economics: British Library of Political and Economic Science, Papers of Arthur George Bottomley, Bottomley 26, Box 3, *Fact Sheets on the Commonwealth: Rhodesia* (London: HMSO, August 1965), p. 4, ‘Franchise’.

- (c) Over 30 years of age and income of £132 or ownership of property of value of £275 and primary education, or
- (d) Over 30 years of age and income of £198 or ownership of property of value of £385, or
- (e) Kraal heads with a following of 20 or more heads of families, or
- (f) Ministers of religion.

Provision is made for a person paying for property by instalments to qualify for the 'B' Roll. A married woman is deemed to have the same qualifications as her husband (one wife only) if she does not qualify in her own right. No limit is set to the number of persons who can register as voters but in elections in 'A' Roll constituencies 'B' Roll voters do not count for more than 25 per cent of 'A' Roll votes cast; in 'B' Roll electoral districts 'A' Roll votes do not count for more than 25 per cent of 'B' Roll votes cast.

Registered voters on 30th April 1963 were as follows:

	'A' Roll	'B' Roll
Africans	2, 251	10,214
Europeans	88,256	570
Asians	1,193	107
Coloureds	1,275	166
TOTAL	92,975	11,057

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